MASTERS OF MAGICAL POWERS:
THE NATH SIDDHAS IN THE LIGHT OF ESOTERIC NOTIONS

by

GORDAN DJURDJEVIC

B.A., The University of Belgrade, 1989
M.A., The University of British Columbia, 1999

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Asian Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

May 2005

© Gordan Djurdjevic, 2005

Library and Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Published Heritage Branch

Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-494-10482-1
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-494-10482-1

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

ABSTRACT

The Nath Siddhas are North Indian yogis with tantric associations who claim guru Gorakhnath, their founding adept, to be an incarnation of the god Siva. They strive to obtain the eternal body through a regime of yogic practices, which are aimed at transmutation of sexual fluids into elixir. The masters of this yoga are the *siddhas,* the possessors of the *siddhis,* which are occult powers that culminate in immortality and deification. *The Sayings of Gorakh (Gorakh Báni)* is a collection of medieval Hindi poetry attributed to their founder.

Scholars have noticed the importance of the occult in the lifestyle of the Náths. The category of the occult is, however, rarely given appropriate theoretical considerations. The academic discipline for the study of Western esotericism, conversely, directly engages the study of the occult but in a culturally and geographically limited setting. I demonstrate that there are heuristic advantages in applying the conceptual vocabulary and theoretical conclusions of esoteric studies to the investigation of tantra and the yoga of the Nath Siddhas. To do so, I employ the model of esotericism developed by Antoine Faivre. I make evident that all its major elements are applicable to the theory and practice of the Náths. The contextual focus of my exposition is *The Sayings of Gorakh,* partially translated by Shukdev Singh and myself.

I apply the model of esotericism to the Náths by making a threefold thematic division of the subject matter. I investigate their understanding of body and sexuality,

speech and rhetoric, and mind and ideology. I propose that yoga is comparable to magic understood as a quest for power (where power is taken to be the sacred), based on the cultivation of imagination (which I compare to yogic meditation) and the principle of eros (the drive towards union). Other esoteric notions such as correspondences (between micro- and macrocosm), living nature (understood as *sakti)* and transmutation (what the yogis call the reversal, *ulta sâdhand)* are shown to be equally essential in the yoga of the Nâths. I conclude suggesting that esotericism should be seen as a cross-cultural phenomenon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDMENTS

During the process of researching and writing this Thesis, I received generous help and support from numerous persons and institutions. I am grateful to each one of them, including those I will inadvertently overlook in these acknowledgements.

In India, my thanks and deepest respect go to Dr. Shukdev Singh, formerly of Benares Hindu University. He not only agreed to collaborate on the translation of *The Sayings of Gorakh,* but also acted throughout that period as a wise patron and friend. I cherish the memory of those mornings spent in his home, engaged in what he used to call 'fighting with the text.' I learned so much from our discussions, and I enjoyed and admired his vast learning and his joie de vivre. I am grateful and indebted to him vastly.

In Canada, I benefited from lessons and conversations with professors and students from various faculties at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. My most sincere gratitude goes to the faculty and staff in the Department of Asian Studies. This Thesis has benefited enormously from the feedback I received from my colleagues and friends, Tanya Boughtflower, Harjeet Grewal, and Kathleen Wyma. They read the early versions of each chapter and responded with intelligent and creative criticisms, and they offered constant support. Tanya also generously helped my English with constant advisement on grammar and style. Thank you all.

I am especially pleased to acknowledge the support and guidance I received from my Thesis supervisors. Dr. Daphna Arbel, of the Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies, has been supervising and assisting my work for almost a decade, urging me constantly to remain focused and contextualize my tendency to speculate. Dr.

Harjot Oberoi, of the Department of Asian Studies, has been helpful on various fronts, stimulating as both a lecturer and conversationalist, and inspiring through his scholarship. Dr. Ken Bryant, also of the Department of Asian Studies, has given most generously both of his time and of his advice throughout every phase of the writing of this Thesis. Ken has supervised the work from the initial false starts and cul-de-sacs to the light at the end of the tunnel, never interfering with my choice of destination, but always pointing out the clashes I am bound to suffer if I don't clear the road. My gratitude and respect for his guidance are immense.

I was also fortunate to receive constant help and support on the domestic front. Sasha Paradis has collaborated on this project from the beginning. She has read and commented on every aspect of this work and provided encouragement when all the ships were sinking. Without her assistance, wisdom, and good taste this Thesis would be greatly impoverished. Dragana Bozickovic Djurdjevic contributed constant moral support and advice. Branko Vrbic helped through astute conversations and book lending. I am thankful for all the above for their help and friendship.

The research on which this Thesis is based was funded by the Government of India (GoI) through the India Studies Program of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI). Neither the GoI nor SICI necessarily endorses the views expressed herein.

I acknowledge with many thanks the generous support from the Asa Johal Fellowship in Asian Studies and the Goel Scholarship in South Asian Studies.

Any factual mistakes and errors of judgement in the text are my sole responsibility.

This Thesis is dedicated to Ivan and Cailleach.

CO-AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The Appendix of this Thesis, which consists of the translation of the *sabads* and *pads* from the collection of texts known as the *Gorakh Bânï,* has a joint authorship. These translations are the result of collaboration between Gordan Djurdjevic and Dr. Shukdev Singh, formerly of Benares Hindu University, Varanasi, India. More information on the process of translation can be found in "A Note to the Translations" (pp. 201-2), to which I refer the reader. Stated succinctly, Gordan Djurdjevic did the first rough version of the translations from medieval Hindi and Dr. Singh checked the accuracy of these, corrected errors, and provided commentaries and background information. The whole process was envisioned and conducted in the spirit of mutual endeavour, as a joint enterprise. Therefore, Shukdev Singh and Gordan Djurdjevic are to be considered co-authors of the translations found in the Appendix (pp. 203-326).

INTRODUCTION

How do we understand and represent the modes of thought and action of other societies, other cultures? Since we have to undertake this task from a Western baseline so to say, how are we to achieve the 'translation of cultures,' i.e. understand other cultures as far as possible in their own terms but in our language, a task which also ultimately entails the mapping of the ideas and practices onto Western categories of understanding ... ?

Stanley Tambiah,
Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality

...by bringing together and juxtaposing two different, previously unrelated things, we can gain new insights into both. I am by no means searching for some universal archetype or deeper identity; rather, I am simply employing comparison as a pragmatic tool or heuristic device, which can help us to see new things that would otherwise go unnoticed.

Hugh B. Urban,
"Elitism and Esotericism: Strategies of Secrecy and Power in South Indian Tantra and French Freemasonry"

This study is intended with a twofold purpose in mind. On a less controversial level, I am presenting a translation of the significant part of the vernacular yogic anthology known as the *Gorakh Bam,* or *The Sayings of Gorakh.* This translation has a joint authorship; it is the product of collaboration between Dr. Shukdev Singh and myself.[1] We have translated

[1] **For this translation and the description of the translation process, see the Appendix. I have to make it clear that what I will be calling 'The Sayings of Gorakh' in this study refers** *only* **to the** *sabad* **and** *pad* **section of the collection of texts compiled by Pitambaradatta Barthwal and issued as** *Gorakh Bam* **(Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1955 (1st ed. 1942). These two sections are the most voluminous in the collection; in Barthwal's edition they occupy pages 1-158. Occasionally, I make references to the other texts from this collection. Their translations are not included in the Appendix. These translations are mine. Whenever I**

the *sabad* and *pad* section of the text in Benares, India, in the period between November 2002 and April 2003. This text, *The Sayings of Gorakh,* is a collection of late medieval Hindi poetry, traditionally ascribed to Gorakhnath: a celebrated adept of *hatha* ('intense') yoga, and one of the founders of the order *(sampraday)* of the Nath Siddhas. On the level of hermeneutical engagement with the text, in my conceptual approach to the theory and practice of the Nath Siddhas in general, I am suggesting that our understand of these yogis will be enriched if we conceptualize and theorize about the categories of esotericism, the occult, and magic (soon to be explained). What follows, then, is my attempt to elucidate the meaning of the text of *The Sayings of Gorakh* through the application of the conceptual apparatus of esotericism. In this sense, this Thesis is, in addition to the translation of texts, an attempt at the translation of cultures, in the light of Stanley Tambiah's remarks quoted in the motto above. My central argument is two-faceted: I propose that Indian tantra and *hatha* yoga stand in analogical relation to Western esotericism and that the two traditions, although rooted in their respective cultural environments and shaped by their particular historical trajectories, share a number of formal similarities.

'Master of magical powers' is a possible translation of the Hindi designation *Nath Siddha.* 'Nath Siddhas' is thus a generic term for a North Indian group of yogis who claim spiritual descent from the god Siva, his human disciple Matsyendranath, and the probable historical founder of their order, the great guru Gorakhnath. Popularly known as the *jogis,* they are credited, *inter alia,* with the development of the discipline of cultivated body, *hatha yoga,* the central practices of which concern the assumptions of various

refer to the *Gorakh Barn,* **instead of** *The Sayings of Gorakh,* **it should be understood that the reference is made to these other texts.**

bodily postures and a regime of breathing exercises and meditations. The metaphysical aspect of this form of yoga implicates the possibility of achieving immortality by inwardly drinking the elixir, produced through the sublimation of semen and the awakening of the latent energies in the body. This position places the Nâth Siddhas within the broader milieu of Indian tantra. The historical origins of the group lie in medieval times, and although the order still exists, it has long passed the zenith of its strength and influence. The literature produced by these yogis is preserved both in the Sanskrit idiom and in the collections of vernacular poetry, traditionally transmitted through the medium of song by traveling ascetics. One collection of such poetry is the already mentioned text of *The Sayings of Gorakh.* The Nâth Siddhas and *The Sayings of Gorakh* will be the contextual focus of this work.

The Nâth Siddhas have been the subject of a relatively modest number of academic studies in the Western languages. In 1937, Mohan Singh authored a pioneering study, *Gorakhnath and Medieval Hindu Mysticism,*[4] which introduced the subject of the Nâth yogis and provided basic information on their most important adepts. Singh also speculated on historical issues, and presented some translations, the most important being

[2] **There is no scholarly consensus as to the tantric nature of the Nathist yoga, and some, notably David Gordon White, prefer to regard the tantra and yoga as discrete traditions.** *Vide infra.* **I do not engage the issue for the simple reason that my suggested conceptual category, that is to say esotericism, encompasses** *both* **tantra and yoga (or, at least, the** *hatha* **yoga variety associated with the Naths).**

[3] **See for example, Edward O. Henry,** *Chant the Names of God: Musical Culture in Bhojpuri-speaking Area* **(San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1988), in particular 160-89; Ann Grodzins Gold,** *A Carnival of Parting: The tales of King Bharthari and King Gopi Chand as Sung and Told by Madhu Natisar Nath of Ghatiyali, Rajasthan* **(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; and Catherine Champion, "A Contre Courant (Ulta Sadhana). Tradition Orale du Nord-est de l'Inde: L'example des Recits Chantes Bhojpuri" in** *Living Texts from India,* **eds. Richard K. Barz and Monika Thiel-Horstmann (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), 63-85.**

[4] **Mohan Singh,** *Gorakhnath and Medieval Hindu Mysticism* **(Lahore: Oriental College, 1937).**

the *Gorakh Bodh,* consisting of the conversation between Gorakh and his teacher Matsyendranath.[5] This was followed by George Weston Briggs' *Gorakhnath and the Kánphata Yogis.*[6] Briggs presents a wealth of information - for example, he has supplied a Sanskrit text of the *Gorakga Sataka* together with the English translation - but his exposition is marred by a condescending approach and poor organization of the material. More important was Shashibhushan Dasgupta's *Obscure Religious Cults?* which treated the Náths together with some non-orthodox Buddhist, Vaisnava, and Muslim groups. Dasgupta is probably the first scholar who emphasized the connection between the techniques of *hatha yoga* and Indian alchemy. Akshaya Kumar Banerjea wrote the most detailed study on the subject of the *Philosophy of Gorakhnath?* mostly based on material from Sanskrit sources. Some of the most interesting and valuable work on the Nath yogis was done by Gopinath Kaviraj, who also focused on doctrinal issues and Sanskrit texts, exemplified by essays such as the "Philosophy of the Nathas,"[9] and "Some Aspects of the History and Doctrine of the Nathas."[10]

The important contribution from Charlotte Vaudeville[11] consisted in drawing attention to the Nathist influence on the poetic imagery of the great Kabir. Ann Grodzins Gold has focused her research on the tension between the ethos of renunciation and the pleasures and drives of domestic life, as attested in the cycle of stories about the kings,

[5] **See ibid., 48-67.**
[6] **George Weston Briggs,** *Gorakhnath and the Känphafa Yogis* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998 [1st ed. Calcutta, 1938]).**
[7] **Shashibhushan Dasgupta,** *Obscure Religious Cults* **(Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1969).**
[8] **Akshaya Kumar Banerjea,** *Philosophy of Gorakhnath: With Goraksha-Vacana-Sangraha* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999 [1st ed. Gorakhpur, 1962]).**
[9] **Gopinath Kaviraj, "Philosophy of the Näthas," in** *Selected Writings of M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj* **(Varanasi: Mata Anandamayee Ashram, 1990), 159-64.**
[10] **Gopinath Kaviraj, "Some Aspects of the History and Doctrines of the Näthas," in** *Notes on Religion and Philosophy* **(Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1987), 56-79.**
[11] **Charlotte Vaudeville,** *Kabir* **(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).**

and subsequent yogis, Bharthari and Gopicand. The work of Véronique Bouillier deals with the Nâths in Nepal, their relationship with the ruling dynasties, and her particular insistence that the main aspect of yogic stories and legends is related to the *princely* character of their heroes. Catharina Kiehnle has produced a study on the yoga of the Nâths based on Marâthï sources attributed to the famous Mahârâstrian saint Jnândev.[14] David Cashin authored a very fine study of what he designates as 'the Sahajiyâ-Nâth-Sufi confluence in Bengal.'[15] The most comprehensive work so far is a study by David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body.*[16] White's work, a veritable *magnum opus,* is very broad in its scope, although the kernel of his book centers on yogic internalization of the methods of Indian alchemy.

THE NATH SIDDHAS, MAGIC, THE OCCULT AND ESOTERICISM

There is, however, one crucially important element intimately related to the phenomenon of the Nath Siddhas that, although recognized by scholars, remains insufficiently conceptualized. What I have in mind is that aspect of religious thought and behaviour that is attested cross-culturally and often designated under the rubric of magic, the occult, or

Ann Grodzins Gold, *Carnival of Parting;* **"Gender and Illusion in a Rajasthani Yogic Tradition," in** *Gender, Genre, and Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions,* **eds. Arjun Appadurai, Frank J. Korom, and Margaret A. Mills (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 102-35; "The Once and Future Yogi: Signs of Rule and Renunciation in the Rajasthani Tale of Gopi Chand,"** *Journal of Asian Studies,* **48, 4 (1989), 770-86.**

[13] **See, for example, Véronique Bouillier,** *Ascètes et Rois: Un monastère de Kanphata Yogis au Népal* **(Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1997; "Growth and Decay of a Kanphata Yogi Monastery in South-West Nepal," in** *The Indian Economie and Social History Review2S.2* **(1991), 151-170; "The King and His Yogi: Prithvi Nàràyan Sàh, Bhagavantanàth and the Unification of Nepal in the Eighteenth Century," in** *Gender, caste and Power in South Asia: Social Status and Mobility in a Transitional Society,* **ed. John P. Neelsen (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991), 3-21.**

[14] **Catharina Kiehnle,** *Songs on Yoga: Texts and Teachings of the Mahârâstrian Nâths* **(Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997).**

[15] **David Cashin,** *The Ocean of Love: Middle Bengali Sufi Literature and the Fakirs of Bengal* **(Stockholm: Association of Oriental Studies, 1995).**

esotericism. I will provide the elaboration of these concepts in due course, but the basic definitions might be beneficial immediately, so that the reader may follow the line of my argument.

By *magic* I mean an action, often ritual and symbolic in character, by which the performer attempts to acquire power and induce desired change. Unlike prayer, which is based on expectation of divine grace, the effects of magic are supposed to ensue as a necessary outcome of the performed action(s). I will subsequently argue that in magic power has a sacral character, that its driving mechanism is the cultivated imagination, and that its nature is 'erotic' Magic is also one of the occult disciplines or 'sciences.'

The *occult* itself is sometimes taken as a synonym for magic, at other times its semantic range is conflated with esotericism.[17] I try to maintain a heuristic division, clearly worked out by Edward Tiryakian *(vide infra),* between esoteric theory and occult practice. The gist of Tiryakian's analysis is that the occult practices rely on hidden forces in nature and the human mind in order to produce empirical results. The occult disciplines include magic, alchemy, divination, astrology, and the like.

The occult practices rest on the assumptions of *esoteric* theory. "Derived from the Greek term *esoteros,* esotericism refers to what is 'inner' or hidden, what is known only to the initiated few, and closed to the majority of mankind in the exoteric world."[18] Perhaps the most fundamental esoteric idea consists of the notion of correspondence between

[16] **David Gordon White,** *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* **(Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.**

[17] **To give just one example, in a recent and excellent study on the place of occultism in the formation of modernity, the author makes a reference to the prolific writer A. E. Waite who "noted that the terms 'transcendental, Hermetic, Rosicrucian, mystical, esoteric or occult' were used 'indiscriminately' during the nineteenth century..." Alex Owen,** *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* **(Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 52. Owen herself blures the distictions when she refers, for example, to "'esoteric philosophy' or occultism." Ibid., 4.**

various aspects of reality. This idea leads to the postulate of the human being as a *microcosm,* or to use the Sanskrit term, *ksudra brahmanda.* The whole world, god(s) included, is present within the hidden aspects of the human body and mind. This postulate determines the typically esoteric sense of spiritual attention, which is often characterized by the inward turn and the rejection of trappings of external (exoteric) religion.

To return to the *jogis:* they are customarily described as being involved in magical practices and as possessors of esoteric knowledge and occult powers. They have diamond and eternal bodies, fly through the air, generate living beings out of ashes, and perform all sorts of other magical feats - generally associated with the eight supernatural powers or *siddhis}*[9] According to Shashibhushan Dasgupta, whose scholarship on these matters is exemplary, "The general religious nature of Nathism is characterised by a wide-spread belief in *occult power* attained through the practice of yoga."[20] George W. Briggs declares that, "Quite in keeping with the claims to supernatural power, which skill the Yoga is supposed to confer, is the popular belief that Yogis work in magic."[01] In a similar manner, Catherine Champion states that "Gorakhnath is described [in the yogic lore] as a magician, as a *vidyadhara* or the possessor of *the occult powers,* the knower of *the occult*

Hugh B. Urban, "Elitism and Esotericism: Strategies of Secrecy and Power in South Indian Tantra and French Freemasonry," in *Numen,* **44 (1997), 1.**

[19] **"The eight supernatural faculties, viz.,** *Animä* **(the power of becoming as small as an atom),** *Mahimä* **(the power of becoming big),** *Laghimä* **(the power of assuming excessive lightness at will),** *Garimä* **(the power of becoming as heavy as one likes),** *Präpti* **(the power of obtaining all objects at well [sic; 'will' is meant]),** *Prakämya* **(the power of obtaining all objects of pleasure at will),** *Isitva* **(the power of obtaining supremacy over everything) and** *Vaätva* **(the power of subduing, fascinating or bewitching) are well known in the school of yoga. ... These powers are generally known as the eight power of the lord Siva himself, who is the lord of yoga. The Näth Siddhas ... displayed throughout these eight supernatural powers." Dasgupta,** *Obscure Religious Cults,* **212.**

[20] **Ibid., 211. Emphasis added.**

[21] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,* **128.**

science." The category of the occult is not, however, engaged in a serious way nor is it given adequate treatment in the academic works dealing with the Naths. Even White, whose study explores in great detail the occult science of alchemy, does not correlate its principles with the broader conceptual foundations of the esoteric and magical Weltanschauung. This attitude would be less problematic if the occult was generally well known and clearly understood. However, this is hardly the case. There is little in the literature on the Naths that provides adequate answers to the questions: What is the occult, what are its ideological presuppositions, its cross-cultural similarities and regional particularities?

This same critical remark - the lack of theoretical engagement with the category of magic or esotericism - can be applied to tantric studies in general. There is a noticeable tendency to emphasize and focus on the spiritual and philosophical aspects of tantra, at the expense of its 'dark' side characterized by the occult quest for power. Jeffrey Kripal makes the following pertinent remark: "Too often scholars have equated Tantra with a philosophical school enshrined in ancient Sanskrit texts and have ignored the popular connotations of the term *Tantrika,* almost all of which revolve around the notions of *magical power,* strangeness, seediness, and sex." He goes on to comment that, "As scholars have pointed out, perhaps too often, Tantra is an *esoteric culture,* infamously difficult to study."[24] Douglas Renfrew Brooks similarly sees the particularity of tantras and tantrikas in the context of "their popular associations with eroticism, alchemy, and

Champion, "A Contre Courant" 68. Emphases added..

[23] **Jeffrey Kripal,** *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna, 2'* **ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 28. Emphasis added.**

[24] **Ibid. Emphasis added.**

magic" and claims that "Tantric tradition ... provides a wealth of materials for studies in *esotericism,* mysticism, ritual ..." According to Teun Goudriaan, "The magic lore ... is almost universally present in Tantric literature...". Therefore, it appears a desideratum to conceptualize the issue of esotericism as it manifests itself within the framework of tantra. What *is* exactly the occult? And what do we *mean* by magic?

I propose to demonstrate that there are advantages in applying the conceptual vocabulary and theoretical conclusions of esoteric studies to the study of Indian tantra and to the Nath Siddhas as a group with tantric connections. I intend to show that the model of Western esotericism exhibits a number of formal similarities - but by no means identities! - when correlated to its Indian counterpart. I want to make it evident that in making this correlation we gain a deeper and novel understanding of both categories. My purpose is then to broaden the field of research related to the disciplines of esoteric and tantric studies, to indicate the presence of cross-cultural similarities, and to suggest some theoretical improvements. In that sense, this study is a response provoked by the comments made by Douglas Brooks and Hugh Urban, both of whom voiced a complaint that there is a lack of comparative dimension in the study of tantra and esotericism.

[25] **Douglas Renfrew Brooks,** *The Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Sakta Tantrism* **(Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 5.**

[26] **Ibid., x.**

[27] **Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens and Teun Goudriaan,** *Hindu Tantrism* **(Leiden and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1979), 23.**

[28] **Brooks,** *Secret of the Three Cities,* **210, n.4, writes that "there has so far been no systematic effort to provide a theoretical footing for studying Tantrism in the context of comparative studies in religion." In his assessment of the state of esoteric studies, Hugh B. Urban makes a comment that "what is still lacking, I believe, is any broader cross-cultural and comparative-framework; nor has there been adequate attention given to the concrete social and political role of the esoteric traditions within their historical context." "Elitism and Esotericism: Strategies of Secrecy and Power in South Indian Tantra and French Freemasonry,"** *Numen,* **vol 44, 1 (1997), 2.**

In order to prevent possible misunderstandings, I must emphasize at the outset that I will not be engaging in a comparative effort in the classical sense. Rather, I intend to construct what Hugh Urban refers to as "a *dialectical* image - born out of the mirroring and mimesis that goes on between Western and Indian minds."[29] My purpose then lies in the effort to understand a particular tantric manifestation, the Náth Siddhas, in the mirror of the theoretical apparatus developed in the study of (Western) esotericism. In order to do so I will take advantage of a model established in the work of Antoine Faivre. The French scholar conceptualizes esotericism on the basis of four primary and two secondary characteristics, to be explained in due course. This model will be amplified, and perhaps modified, by incorporation of the relevant insights of other scholars as well as by my application of it onto a non-Western subject. To commence, let me delineate the contours of the issue. In what follows, I will first present a snapshot of general features associated with the Nam yogis, following which I will provide basic clarification of the conceptual model of esotericism.

THE NÁTH SIDDHAS

The Náth Siddhas, whose other appellations include the *Gorakhnatts,* the *kanphata yogis* (the 'split-ear yogis'), or, as already mentioned, simply the *jogis,* appear as an organized order *(sampradáy)* in India somewhere between the 9th and 12th centuries of the Common Era. (Indian tradition recognizes the Nine Naths and Eighty-Four Siddhas, the two groups being occasionally confused.) The originator of the order of the

[29] **Urban,** *Tcrntra,* **3. The concept of the 'dialectical image' was advanced by Walter Benjamin. See his** *Illuminations,* **ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).**
[30] **See the admirable feat of sorting out the history of the order in White,** *Alchemical Body,* **especially pp. 78-122.**

Nath yogis is believed to be the great god Siva, wherefrom his designation as Adi Nath, or the 'Original Master.' His immediate human disciple was the controversial figure Matsyendranath, whose most important disciple, the great guru Gorakhnath, is often deified.[31] The primary characteristic of this group of yogis consists in their insistence that the ultimate spiritual goal, which in this case entails the acquisition of immortality and the assumption of the status of a 'second Siva', is attainable through the manipulation of the body, more specifically bodily fluids and currents of energy, aided by meditation, through the regime of the 'intense' i.e. *hatha* yoga. Generally speaking, the practice consists of yogic postures, breathing exercises, mantra chanting, visualizations, and, in certain cases, ritual sex. David Gordon White summarizes the yogic system of the Naths as follows:

> This system projected upon the gross human body a remarkably intricate physiology of the yogic or subtle body, which was composed of a series of energy centers, networks of channels, and an array of male and female divine forces. It was upon this subtle body that the yogic practitioner, through an elaborate combination of postures, breathing techniques, meditative states, and acoustic devices, came to channel forcibly all of his internalized divine energies, breaths, bodily fluids, and mental states into a single point, at which he realized, once and for all time, bodily perfection and immortality.[32]

Devoid of strict requirements for sanskritic learning and brahminical culture, unconfined by a formal hieratic mediation and temple worship, this yoga is, therefore, and in contradistinction with the Patanjali-associated *astanga,* primarily a form of *praxis,* a *sadhana,* and not a philosophical system, *darsana.* Although by all accounts a difficult enterprise to carry out, it is conceptually and methodologically simple. Its success is not

[31] **The adepts of the Order are considered to be immortal.**

dependent on ideological constraints and it is occasionally practiced outside the 'Hindu' fold, by Buddhists,[33] Jains,[34] and even Muslims.[35] In addition to its practical orientation, the message of the Nath Siddhas, as recorded in *The Sayings of Gorakh,* contains a moral aspect - a call to simple life and sexual continence - and a voice of social critique, mostly addressed to the pundits, whose bookish learning is ridiculed and whose authority is rejected. Since success in the form of yoga as envisioned by the Naths depends primarily on the knowledge and mastery of one's body and its subtle aspects and not on the presuppositions of the brahmanical *varnasramadharma* it is potentially subversive to the same and as a consequence it is sometimes criticized and often marginalized. As already stated, the order is customarily considered to be tantric in character.

According to the Nath Siddhas, the key to salvation - which is the ultimate *raison d'etre* of every Indian spiritual and philosophical system - lies in the reversal of a certain process which under ordinary conditions inevitably leads to enslavement in illusion, and ultimately to death. This process is intimately related to human sexuality, or more

[32] **David Gordon White, "Wonders of Sri Mastnath," in** *Religions of India in Practice,* **ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 399-400.**

[33] **The theory and practice of the early medieval Buddhist Sahajiyas bears close resemblance to the general outlook of the Nath Siddhas. See, for example, Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **1-109; Per Kvaerne,** *An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs: A Study of Caryagiti* **(Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1986 [1977]). Closely related are also the Buddhist Siddhacaryas, or Mahasiddhas, for which see** *Masters of Mahamudra: Songs and Histories of the Eighty-Four Buddhist Siddhas,* **trans, and commentary by Keith Dowman (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1985).**

[34] **"Matsyendra was ... the father and guru of the two Jain** *tirthamkaras* **NTmnath and Parasnath." White,** *Alchemical Body,* **93. See also Paul Dundas, "The Jain Monk Jinapati Suri Gets Better of a Nath Yogi," in** *Tantra in Practice,* **231-8.**

[35] **See, for example, Cashin,** *Ocean of Love.* **Two sixteenth century Indian Sufi romances abound in the Nath lore motifs; see Malik Muhammad Jaisi,** *Padmavati,* **trans. A. G. Shireff (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society, 1944), and Manjhan,** *Madhumalati: An Indian Sufi Romance,* **trans, with Introduction and Notes by Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman with Shyam Manohar Pandey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). On the agonic elements in the encounters between Sufis and the Naths, see Simon Digby, "To Ride a Tiger or a Wall? Strategies of Prestige in Indian Sufi Legend," in** *According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India,* **eds. Winand M. Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 99-129. On the relationship between Naths and Indian Ismailis, see Dominique-Sila Khan, "Conversation between Guru Hasan KabTruddTn and JogI Kanipha: Tantra Revisited by the Isma'ili Preachers," in** *Tantra in Practice,* **285-95.**

specifically, to the issue of the preservation or waste of semen *(bindu).* The released semen is the gross form of a subtle substance that has a potential value - if not wasted - as the elixir of immortality, the *amrt.* In this respect, the Nam Siddhas, as David Gordon White, following Dasgupta and others, has argued, are most closely related to the

TO

school of Indian alchemy, the *rasdyana.*

Alchemy as a science of transformations is, in a nutshell, an attempt to transform base metals into gold and to find the elixir of immortality, or at least the means of longevity. The Nath Siddhas correlate the methodology of alchemy with yoga, and perform their practices in the laboratory of their bodies. Indian alchemy takes mercury as the basic substance to be transformed; with the Nath Siddhas, the mercury is replaced by semen *(bindu).* Thus we find the following precept: "*Bindu* in the mouth of vagina is [like] mercury in the mouth of fire. / Whosoever preserves it, he is my guru."[40] As a consequence of this position, the Nath Siddhas embraced what appears to be an anti-sexual and misogynist stance.

At this point, I would like to emphasize the following assertion: the theory and practice of the Siddhas are inseparably related to the issue of sexuality. The question is,

Obviously, the yogic lore assumes a male viewpoint and discusses human body from such a perspective. In practice, however, this sexist attitude is counterbalanced by the fact that women are admitted into the Order as initiates. According to Briggs, "Women who have been initiated into the sect are numerous. Those who are wives of Yogis are of two classes, those who are themselves Yoginis and those who are not. Both classes are common." *Gorakhnath,* **48. In addition, a Sanskrit text attributed to Gorakhnath and translated by Briggs, the** *Goraksa Sataka,* **talks of the** *bindu* **as being present in both male and female sexual fluids: "Further, the bindu (is) of two kinds, pale-white and blood-red: The pale-white they call** *semen virile,* **the blood-red menstrual fluid."** *Goraksa Sataka,* **72, in ibid., 298.**

[37] **See, for example, Mircea Eliade,** *The Forge and the Crucible,* **2nd ed., trans. Stephen Corrin (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978 [1962])esp. 127-41.**

[38] **"The Siddha alchemists were, by and large, Nath Siddhas; and because the Nath Siddhas were itinerant, they made Siddha alchemy a pan-Indian phenomenon. ... [T]he language of the Nath Siddhas'** *hatha yoga* **is often nothing other then a projection of alchemical discourse upon the human body." White,** *Alchemical Body,* **56-7. See also Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults ,* **192-4.**

[39] **It should be obvious that I am using the word science in its pre-modern sense.**

what *kind* of sexuality? What *is,* exactly, the position of the Naths vis-a-vis sex? What role does it play in their spiritual enterprise? Are they really 'anti-sexual'? Is the celibacy of a Nath yogi different (in character, meaning, purpose) from the celibacy of an 'orthodox' renouncer *(samnyasi)7* And what is the role of esotericism and magic in this regard? If we say that the Siddhas in fact practice an esoteric form of sexuality, what do we exactly mean by that assertion?

My position is that the sexuality as understood and practiced by the Siddhas is a very complex phenomenon and does not represent either a case of simple rejection or an indulgence. Basically, it is a power. It is a power over which they are asserting their mastery, their 'care of the self in Foucault's sense of the phrase.[41] Through mastery over desire and control of the semen, an aspirant becomes an adept. But the sexuality has not been rejected: it has been internalized and transformed into the energy of the coiled snake, *kunddiini,* and thus it has made possible the attainment of mystical states. As David Kinsley remarks, "It is not sublimated or curbed sexual activity that awakens the *kundalini* but sexual activity properly understood or perhaps properly appreciated."[42] Sexuality is an instrument for the acquisition of occult powers and an occult power in itself. In alchemical terms, it is a *materia prima,* a raw energy with a material correlate (the sperm, the menstrual blood), that may and should be transformed into elixir. Fundamentally, the sexuality here is the *potency* of power: the power of transmutation, the power of transubstantiation, the power of deification. In other words, with these yogis the exoteric, or ordinary, approach to sexuality is supplemented by an esoteric one.

[40] *Gorakh Banl, sabad* **142. "bhag mukhi byad agani mukhi para / jo rakhai so guru hamara." (The subsequent references to the** *sabads* **will be abbreviated as GBS)**

[41] **Michel Foucault,** *The History of Sexuality,* **vol. 3,** *The Care of the Self,* **trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1988). See also a relevant discussion in Chapter 2 of this Thesis, pp. 92-3.**

Nevertheless: without the engagement with the powers of eros there is no scope for the acquisition of the miraculous powers, there are no *siddhis,* and thus there are no Siddhas[43]

The esotericism and power of the Siddhas are also inextricably linked in the social sphere. To acknowledge this fact one needs to remember that Nath yogis occupy the central position in their own ideological universe, which is the universe of the occult, or of the esoteric. What may be interpreted as a *ndthist* parallel to the *varnasramadharma* system, the sense of belonging to a community based on (and possessing the secrets of) esotericism, places the members of the fraternity on top of the social and spiritual hierarchy. Because they are adepts of miraculous powers, because they were established by the Great God Siva Himself, because their most important human teacher was also an avatar of the Great God, because they know the secrets of immortality, they consider themselves higher and better, and certainly more powerful, than priests and princes. Their aspirations and claims of accomplishment are aimed at divinity, and at least Gorakhnath is certainly deified.[44] As C. J. Fuller reminds us, "This reflects a supremely important fact about Hinduism: unlike Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it postulates no absolute distinction between divine and human beings. In many contexts, human beings are seen as actually divine in one way or another."[45]

David Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahavidyas* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 243.**

[43] **It will be apparent in a due course that sexuality has not been given a prominent place in the accounts of the Western Esoteric Tradition. It might appear at the first glance that this is one of the elements that separates the two traditions. My contention, however, is that the exclusion of sexuality from the academic discourse of the Western Esoteric Tradition is an oversight. Thus, it follows that a closer investigation of the esoteric approaches to sexuality in the West is a desideratum.**

[44] **"It is noticeable that not only is there the tradition of Mahádeva or Siva being the original instructor of the cult, but that Gorakh-náth, the most renowned and most important yogin of the sect, has frequently been identified with Siva or deified as such." Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **197.**

[45] **C. J. Fuller,** *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* **(Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3-4.**

In this way, we have a cluster of notions that are mutually related: internalized sexuality, appropriation of alchemical techniques, search for occult powers that lead to deification, social power inherently present in what is basically a secret society,[46] and the widely perceived involvement of *jogis* in magic. All these elements converge in the unifying category of esotericism that subsumes them into a meaningful whole. The model of esotericism therefore seems a suitable methodological category through which to approach and conceptualize the phenomenon of the Nath yogis. I will now elaborate upon this model and provide definitions of most important relevant terms.

THE MODEL OF ESOTERICISM

I consider it advantageous to approach the Nath Siddhas by employing the category of *esotericism* as the term is understood in its technical sense by a group of scholars led by the influential and erudite work of Antoine Faivre.[47] The academic discipline that they devote their work to is the study of what they usually designate as *Western Esotericism.* Arthur Versluis defines the general meaning of the term as follows: "Esotericism, as a field of academic study, refers to alternative, marginalized, or dissident religious movements or philosophies whose proponents in general distinguish their beliefs, practices, and experiences from public, institutionalized religious traditions."[48] This definition is also applicable to the Naths and explains rather well their position within the

[46] **For the relationship between secrecy and power, see Urban, "Elitism and Esotericism."**

[47] **See, for example, Antoine Faivre,** *Golden Fleece and Alchemy* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1993); Access** *to Western Esotericism* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1994);** *The Eternal Hermes: From Greek God to Alchemical Magus,* **trans. Joscelyn Godwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1995);** *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism,* **trans. Christine Rhone (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2000).**

broader milieu of Indian ('Hindu,' Jain, Buddhist, Muslim) orthodoxy. In addition, it has the advantage of not being culturally exclusive, and is thus applicable to diverse traditions. A relative weakness of this definition, however, lies in the fact that its meaning is constructed only negatively, in reference to normative, institutionalized, or exoteric religions from which esotericism differs. In other words, Versluis does not really define what esotericism is, only what it is not. For this reason, I have decided to focus on Faivre's model - soon to be explained - because it provides thematic identification of the necessary elements of esotericism. This will afford me a chance to present a more detailed and specific correlation between the essentials of Western esotericism and the yoga of the Náths.

Here, an immediate objection could be made: What is the justification for importing a Western model of 'esotericism' when studying the Nam Siddhas since this is not an Indian category? But as C. J. Fuller argues: "Anthropological or sociological analysis abstracts from empirical data and also attempts to make them intelligible *by using concepts and deploying generalizations that are formulated comparatively* and rarely correspond precisely to indigenous categories in any particular society."[49] On the other hand, the use of indigenous vocabulary in constructing scholarly conceptual apparatus is not in and of itself a guarantee of taxonomie certitude. It is now obvious and widely known how flawed are scholarly concepts such as 'Hinduism' and 'Tantrism' - although they are based on Indian terms. The heuristic advantage of employing the category of esotericism, in my opinion, lies in its ability to make conceptualizations about the nature of the Nath Siddhas easier and clearer, the nature of knowledge being such that

[48] Arthur Versluis, "Mysticism and the Study of Esotericism: Part II," *Esotérica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* 5 (2003): 27.

it thrives on comparisons, however odious. In addition, one has to be aware of the fact that Indian spirituality, especially in the form of yoga and tantra, has also become a part of Western Esoteric Tradition, at least since the establishing of the Theosophical Society (founded 1875) onwards.[50] In that sense also, the comparison is justified.

At the outset, I want to make it clear that I understand esotericism as a self-consistent spiritual and / or philosophical attitude that is potentially applicable to various ideological positions and practical concerns. The term is, by the way, frequently employed by the scholars who often refer to, say, Shingon as an 'esoteric Buddhism,' or to Sufism as an 'esoteric branch of Islam,' and so on. Here it is interesting to note that it is not an isolated opinion to regard the 'religion' of the Siddhas as a distinct and self-contained phenomenon.[51] The main characteristic of their 'religion' is that it is based on the concept of power, *siddhi.* To the degree that what we call the occult or esoteric is about power and secrecy and knowledge of the hidden things, it is legitimate to classify the Naths as an esoteric group. To justify this classification, a basic theoretical explanation of the principals of esotericism is in order.

Fuller, *Camphor Flame,* **10; emphasis added.**

[50] **The Theosophical Society in India was established in 1879, bringing a Western esoteric current to the South Asia. See Joscelyn Godwin,** *The Theosophical Enlightenment* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1994), 307, 333, and** *passim.* **This is an example of the 'mirroring and mimesis' between Indian and Western esotericism, establishing what Urban calls a 'dialectical image.'** *Vide supra,*

[51] **"'Nathism' has been recognized by some as a separate strand in Indian popular religion, representing, perhaps, an ancient religious tradition alongside Vaishnavism and Shaivism" (Daniel Gold and Ann Grodzins Gold, "The Fate of the Householder Nath,"** *History of Religions* **24, no. 2 [1984]: 115). See also Charlottte Vaudeville,** *A Weaver Named Kabir* **(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 99 and White, "Wonders of Sri Mastnath," 401-2. In the parlance of Kabir, there are 'Hindus, Turks and Jogis', all rejected by him. See Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **76.**

COMPONENTS OF ESOTERICISM

Antoine Faivre has enumerated the following elements as the 'components of esotericism as a form of thought'. The four main elements are, 1: Correspondences, 2: Living Nature, 3: Imaginations and Mediations, and 4: Experience of Transmutation. The additional two elements are 5: The Praxis of Concordance, and 6: Transmission. Arthur Versluis has amplified the list adding the element of 7: Gnosis as the *sine qua non* of esotericism.[54] It is relatively easy to demonstrate that all seven of these characteristics pertain to the metaphysical outlook of the Naths. I will provide a point by point correlation between the constitutive elements of esotericism and the theory and practice of the *jogis* in the concluding part of the next chapter. At this juncture, I would like to present a basic explanation of what the principles of esotericism stand for.[55]

1. *Correspondences* refer to the complex and subtle links that unite otherwise apparently discontinuous elements of reality, matching like with like according to the principle of 'as above, so below.' A prominent feature of this Weltanschauung is represented by the concept of the human being as a microcosm that stands in an analogical relation of similarity, or even identity, with the universal plenum, the macrocosm. Similarly, material things correspond to spiritual realities and vice versa. In India, the term for this relationship of mutual correspondence is *bandhu.* "The assumption then is," as Patrick Olivelle explains, "that the universe constitutes a web of relations, that things that appear to stand alone and apart are, in fact, connected to other

See Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism,* 10.

[53] Ibid., 10-15.

[54] Arthur Versluis, "What is Esoteric? Methods in the Study of Western Esotericism," *Esotérica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* 4 (2002): 2.

[55] 1 am summarizing Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism,* 10-15. See also Faivre and Voss, "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions," 60-62.

things." According to André Padoux, "one of the characteristics of Tantrism lies precisely in the constant establishment of correspondences between humans, rites, and the cosmos, and in the cosmic as well as human aspects of energy."[57] Of course, here and throughout I am asserting the similarity of basic principles between Western and Indian esotericism, not their identity. In the practical application of these principles, the culture-specific difference between Indian and Western models is evident, for example, in the fact that "correspondences between ... history and revealed texts" are of much lesser importance in the East.

2. *Living Nature* is a self-explanatory concept. Due to the paramount importance of the Holy Book in the Western cultural sphere, there is a prominent tendency in Western esotericism to approach nature as a book to be read. This tendency is, naturally, much less exhibited in the case of Indian esoteric traditions. However, the basic postulate, the idea that nature is alive and impregnated by spiritual force is common to both traditions. The prominent expression of this idea in Indian traditions is encountered in tantra, where the phenomenal universe is understood as the manifestation of the Goddess, who is energy and power, *sakti.* Without her, as the famous dictum has it, Siva is just a corpse.

3. *Imaginations and Mediations* are mutually complementary. It is extremely important to realize that imagination here is understood in its specialized meaning, which has nothing to do with daydreaming and disorganized fantasizing. "But rather it is a kind of organ of the soul," as Faivre explains, "thanks to which humanity can establish a

[56] **Patrick Olivelle,** *Upanisads: Translated from the Original Sanskrit* **(Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), lii.**
[57] **André Padoux,** *Vâc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras,* **trans. Jacques Gontier (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992 [Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990]), 24.**

cognitive and visionary relationship with an intermediary world, with a mesocosm - what Henry Corbin proposed calling a *mundus imaginalis.*[59] I am convinced that imagination, as it is understood in the West, is comparable to yogic practice of visualization and meditation. Similarly, I consider the *mundus imaginalis,* the 'imaginal world,' to be the locus of yogic visions and encounters with mystical beings, such as *siddhas* and *vidyddharas.* Also, I am confident that the subtle body, with its system of *cakras* and 'serpent power' or *kundalini sakti,* is both generated by and accessed through the power of cultivated imagination. These points have been observed only tangentially by scholars such as Agehananda Bharati and Mircea Eliade, and the correlation and correspondence between Western and Indian models of imagination is virtually nonexistent.

4. *Experience of Transmutation* is, as Faivre writes, an expression borrowed from alchemy. It refers to "a cooperation between knowledge (in the sense of 'gnosis') and active imagination in order for lead to be changed into silver and silver into gold."[60] The parallel with the Nath Siddhas, whose practice represents the internalization of Indian alchemy, is obvious. In their case, the process starts with the semen *(bindu)* that is eventually transformed into elixir *(amrt).* The yogi is similarly transformed from an ordinary being into an immortal adept. The experience of transmutation is the final of the four necessary components of esotericism. The following two are, according to Faivre, of relative importance. They consist of the praxis of concordance and transmission.

5. *The Praxis of Concordance* amounts to "a consistent tendency to attempt to establish common denominators among two or more different traditions, or even among

Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism,* **11.**
Ibid., 12.
Faivre and Voss, "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions," 61.

all traditions, in hopes of obtaining a gnosis of superior quality."[61] In other words, denominational and doctrinal constraints are much more flexible and relaxed in the case of individuals and groups engaged in esoteric quest. Let us just recall the fact that, for example, tantric ideas and practices are extant in Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and even some forms of unorthodox Islam. This situation, the fact that people and ideas migrate rather easily between various esoteric currents settled within their broader exoteric spiritual environments, leads to the proposal that esotericism should be seen as a means of cultural transfer.[62] This is an additional reason for a more serious engagement with the study of comparative esotericism.

6. *Transmission* of esoteric knowledge is often conducted in a ritual setting, involving one or several rites of initiation. This element is common to both Western and Indian esotericism. Initiation as *diksa* or *abhiseka* is a *sine qua non* requirement in tantric practice. By extension, the importance and sanctity of initiation is transferred onto human preceptor or guru as a person who conducts the ritual and transmits the occult knowledge and power onto the disciple. The veneration of the guru in tantric and yogic traditions is a well-known fact. In addition, the transmission of esoteric knowledge and occult practices from one cultural system into another renders additional weight to the thesis that esotericism is a means of cultural transfer.

7. Arthur Versluis emphasizes the concept of *gnosis* as a constitutive element and the goal of esotericism. I believe that this is a non-problematic proposal. The esoteric

[61] **Ibid., 62.**

[62] **1 am borrowing this idea from Peter Lamborn Wilson. According to his proposal, '"Heresies' are often the means for transfer of ideas and art-forms from one culture to another. ... Medieval Europe might have absorbed much less Islamic/ Greek/ Oriental culture from Spain and elsewhere were it not for scholars of dubious orthodoxy such as Raimundo Lull, Roger Bacon, the alchemists and Ceremonial Magicians, the Kabalists [sic] and Renaissance Neoplatonists like Pico, Bruno, the Fideli d'Amore."** *Scandal: Essays in*

nature of gnosis is self-evident, for it is not a knowledge, or 'wisdom,' of an ordinary kind. The category of gnosis is comparable with, and even etymologically related to, Indian *jnana* and / or *prajnd.* It thus seems meaningful to assert that the element of gnosis is relevant for, and present in, both Western and Indian esotericism.

POWER

There is one element, nonetheless, that is not recognized in the above list of elements of the esoteric tradition. I am referring to a particular branch of the tradition that is due to its importance best treated separately, and addressed by the term magic. The element without which magic is not properly and thoroughly understood is *power.* I would like to reaffirm the proposal that power is one of the central features of the magical quest, in India as in the West. In the words of Teun Goudriaan, "The essence of magic is a grasp for power." It is the search for power that very frequently distinguishes magical activity from the way of life of an 'ordinary' believer.[64] While the latter directs his or her devotion to the omnipotent God/dess/es, the former undergoes the whole set of practices in order to obtain power and achieve desired results. These results may be related to the most basic quotidian concerns and they may include the loftiest spiritual aspirations. But a follower of an occult current usually knows the mode of practice, a *sadhana,* by which it is possible to achieve these results. The power to do so, the power to raise oneself apart from the ordinary, non-initiated believers (considered in tantra as nothing but mere

Islamic Heresy **(Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1988), 13-4.1 find the term 'heresy' culturally limited (a fact acknowledged by Wilson) and derogatory and suggest esotericism as a more appropriate correlate.**

[63] **Teun Goudriaan,** *Maya. Divine and Human: A Study of Magic and Its Religious Foundations in Sanskrit Texts, with Particular Attention to a Fragment on Visnu's Maya Preeserved in Bali* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 58.**

animals, *pasu),* the power to achieve gnosis and immortality - these are the central concerns of magical practice. Consequently, the above list of the key elements of esotericism has to be amplified by the inclusion of the category of power, at least insofar as the subject is magic. In this context, it is appropriate to call to mind the general observation made by Karl Potter, "that Indian philosophy *does* in fact elevate power, control, or freedom to a supereminent position above rational morality...".[66] The yogic quest is, then, just a specific instance of this orientation within a general trend in Indian spiritual landscape.

What I have in mind when referring to the concept of power is in essential agreement with a definition of the term provided by Robert Thurman. According to him, "The term *power* here refers to the energy or ability that enables an individual to cause a desired effect. The essence of magic is that it utilizes techniques that are mysterious to its beholders and commonplace to its masters."[67] In addition, the power discussed here is also the power over oneself, the ability of a person to conquer his or her 'lower' drives and instinctual nature and to acquire spiritual freedom and liberty. As Thurman points out, in India it was traditionally assumed that mastering one's subjective self was "the most practical method of mastery over world." Needless to say, this power also has social repercussions and it is often perpetuated by the mechanisms of common belief.

It is of fundamental importance to realize that power (as the goal of the magic quest to which I am relating the *sddhana* of the *jogis)* possesses *sacral* quality. By sacred,

[64] **Of course, there is no clear-cut division between the two. A certain person may be an 'orthodox believer' and still engage in occasional esoteric activities. This is much more frequently met in India than in the Christian West, due to the restrictive influence of the Church in the latter case.**

[65] **Sanskrit term for a magician,** *vidyadhara,* **literally means 'possessor of knowledge.'**

[66] **Karl H. Potter,** *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* **(Englewood Cliffs, N.J,: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 3. Emphasis in the original. I am grateful to Ken Bryant for drawing my attention to this reference.**

[67] **Robert Thurman, "Magico-Religious Powers," in** *Hidden Truths,* **224.**

I mean that which is an intentional object of religious attention and action. From the point of view of magic, *the sacred manifests itself as power.* Marcel Mauss has advanced this view in his classical study of magic, where he designates the magical power by the Melanesian word *mana:*[69] "Our analysis brings out the fact that *mana* is an idea of the same order as the idea of the sacred." An 'ordinary' believer may *worship* the divine as a personification and source of power, but - within the context of this analysis - the divine is essentially viewed as transcendental and requiring supplication. A magician differs from such a believer by insisting, through his or her actions, that there is a link, a correspondence that establishes the possibility of appropriating this power. And by participating in the exercise of power, the magician also takes share in its nature as the sacred, with which he or she identifies. In this sense, magic may be defined as a religion of power, and magicians as devotees of power.

In so far as the sacred is understood as power and not as love or being-consciousness-bliss, the difference between a *siddha* on the one hand and a *bhakta* or a *veddntin* on the other is, in the ultimate analysis, only doctrinal. But, and this is a crucial distinction, as far as the (esoteric) theory of correspondences establishes the link between the sacred as power and a human who is thus able to participate in this power, a magician's status resembles God/s' and this is potentially problematic and sometimes seen as a sacrilege. This situation is, by the way, more likely to occur within a monotheistic culture. In India, however, it is not uncommon to see human saints as

[68] **Ibid., 228.**
[69] **Georg Luck,** *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* **(Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 3, mentions that "The Greek equivalents [of** *mana],* **found in Hellenistic texts, are** *dynamis* **'power',** *charis* **'grace', and** *arete* **'effectiveness'." The closest Indian equivalents are** *sakti* **and** *siddhi.*
[70] **Marcel Mauss,** *A General Theory of Magic,* **trans. Robert Brain (London and Boston: Routledge and KeganPaul, 1972), 119.**

divine. Here the problem is not so much related to the 'hubris' apropos the assumption of divine status. It has more to do with the fact that 'non-esoteric' saints will tend to emphasize the spiritual aspects of the divine, while a magician (or a *siddha yogi),* believing in 'as above, so below' will often treat the material and bodily as links in the chain that leads to the source of power, and for that reason sacred.[71]

Why would, for example, a Kablr or a Nanak be critical of the *jogis?* Because for the *sants,*[79] the sacred is experienced as a *name* requiring devotion; from their perspective, the *jogis* are deluded in their attention to the 'miracles' of yoga, the *siddhis,* and the concentration on the body. "If by withholding your seed, / you could be saved, O my Brother, / Then surely the eunuchs / would get to the highest heaven? / Says Kablr, / O brother, listen: / Without the name of Ram / none ever achieved salvation!"[73] It appears as if the yogis are obsessed with the self-empowerment. But for the yogis, to obtain and experience the *siddhis* means to gain access to the sacred as power. To become a powerful *siddha* is for them equivalent to the *bhaktas'* participation in Krsna's paradise. By the same token, the body is the focus of attention because it *corresponds* to metaphysical realities, and this attention is, in the ultimate analysis, an act of devotion.

The *sagun bhaktas* criticize *veddntins* for their conception of the ultimate religious goal as the merging into atributless *brahman,* claiming that the Absolute is a personal God, the appropriate practice a loving devotion, and the goal proximity to God (in one form or another). In a similar manner, the *siddhas* are criticized and even ridiculed for the obsession with ('personal') power. But once it is understood that for the

[71] Since the practice of the Siddhas represents appropriation of alchemical principles, and since the alchemy is about the treatment of material substances, the qualification of the material as potentially sacred seems to be natural.

jogis the power *is* the sacred and a manifestation of the sacred, the problem appears to be not more than a conceptual misunderstanding or a doctrinal disagreement.

Magical power also has a social dimension insofar as society assigns such qualification to certain persons and aspects of reality, through the complex mechanisms of belief.[74] A yogi is powerful, among other reasons, because people believe in his power. The source of magical power can be related to metaphysical realities as well as to this world. In the latter case, it is closely linked to liminal, forbidden, and extraordinary: cemeteries, dead, menstruating women, polluting substances, outsiders, and so on.[75] It is also related to psychological states of intense character, such as dreams, visions, states of fear, excitement, intoxication, and the like. "The quality of mana -and of the sacred - appertains to things which are given a very definite position in society, often to the extent of their being considered to exist *outside the normal world and normal practices.* These things play a very considerable role in magic; they provide, in fact, its living forces."[76] In this sense, the marginality, or liminality, of the *jogis* and their dealing with forbidden and polluting substances, their engagement with non-ordinary sexuality, their association with and supposed mastery over snakes, and the display of death-symbolic ashes on their bodies, all of these serve as the source of power associated with them.[77]

On this important tradition see, for example, *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India,* **eds. Karine Schomer and W. H. McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).**

[73] **Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **230-1.**

[74] **See Mauss,** *Theory of Magic,* **91-7.**

[75] **This subject is treated in the classic study by Mary Douglas,** *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* **(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970 [1966]).**

[76] **Mauss,** *Theory of Magic,* **119, emphasis added.**

[77] **Alexis Sanderson contrasts 'the path of purity' associated with the brahminical culture with the 'path of power' typical of tantra. Important aspect of the latter is related to the acquisition of 'power through impurity.' "It was precisely because these ['impure'] forces threatened the Hindu's 'impotent purity' that they [the tantrikas] invited a visionary mysticism of fearless omnipotence, of unfettered super-agency through the controlled assimilation of their lawless power in** *occult manipulations of impurity."* **Sanderson, "Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir," in** *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History,* **eds. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge University**

David Gordon White defines tantra as the "body of belief and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways."[78] Besides the general agreement with the principles of esotericism, this definition is important in that it explains that the divine energy, which is power, is present within the human body. It therefore explains that yogic practices, which intend to access that energy, may be understood as actions that strive to embrace the sacred. In that sense, again, yoga is devotion to the sacred understood as power. To access the energy within the body is equivalent to accessing the sacred as Krsna, or Ram. This also explains that the tantric and yogic focus on the body is meaningful, as a religious and devotional practice, insofar as its foundation is based on the esoteric principle of correspondence. Without this element, yoga is - as its critics claim it to be - narcissism and self-aggrandizement. Again, this means that the yoga of the *siddhas* and *tantrikas* is an esoteric (correspondences at the root of theory) and magical (the sacred as power) discipline.

THE PLAN OF THE WORK

The central thesis of this study argues that there is a formal compatibility between the principles of esotericism and the yoga of the Nath Siddhas. That the previous scholarship has neglected to explore this issue in a meaningful and thorough way is due, I suggest, to

Press, 1985), 200-1; emphasis added. In a similar spirit, Jeffrey Kripal asserts that tantra *'consciously* **uses decadence as a spiritual technique'. Kripal,** *Kali's Child,* **29; emphasis in the original.**

[78] **David Gordon White, "Mapping a Tradition," in** *Tantra in Practice, 9.*

the residual tendency to marginalize the occult.[79] In *chapter one,* in order to clarify the conceptual apparatus utilized in this work, I proceed with an elucidation of the principles of esotericism. I start with the analysis of definitions by Edward Tiryakian, which help us make a useful distinction between *esoteric theory* and *occult practice.*

Next in the chapter, I introduce the topics of magic and alchemy, as the particular branches of esotericism that are of relevance to yoga as practiced by the Naths. (Various conceptual models used to explain the style of yoga advocated by Gorakhnath are adopted for the purpose of throwing light on the 'subject' from various angles. It is a matter of selection and emphasis, and not a contradiction, that I designate this yoga in general terms as esotericism and at other times, more specifically, as magic or alchemy.)

Magic is defined on the basis of three principles. 1. It is oriented towards power (where power is, as Marcel Mauss has argued, understood as the sacred). 2. It is, according to a historian of religions loan Couliano,[80] a science of the imaginary. 3. It is, again with Couliano, a form of eros (that is to say, a practice oriented towards union).[81] My conclusion is that all three of these elements have their counterparts in the yoga of the Siddhas. 1.The Naths are oriented towards power (the *siddhis),* the sanctity of which is the prerogative of the lord Siva and his Sakti, who are the divine embodiments of power. 2. The principle of the imaginary is related to what is in yoga understood as the practice of meditation *(dhyan).* 3. Yoga is akin to eros both etymologically *(yoga* means 'union')

[79] **This tendency has a historical genesis and it is related to changes in Western culture and epistemology. See, for example, loan P. Couliano,** *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance,* **trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and, approaching the issue from a different angle, Michel Foucault,** *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* **(New York: Random House, 1970 [1st. ed. published as** *Les Mots et les choses,* **Paris: Gallimard, 1966]).**

[80] **"The magic that concerns us here is theoretically** *a science of the imaginary,* **which it explores through its own methods and seeks to manipulate at will." Couliano,** *Eros and Magic,* **xviii; emphasis added.**

and functionally *(samâdhi,* as the goal of yoga, is the union between subject and object). From the perspective of common orientation towards power, use of the praxis of imagination, and the erotic nature of its mode of operation, magic and yoga are in accord.

As far as *alchemy* is concerned, it may be best defined as the science of transmutations, which are symbolized by the changes of base metals into gold. In the case of the Nâth yogis, the transmutation is understood as the principle and practice of reversal *(ulta sàdhand).* I argue that the practice of reversal is the central, most important practice in Gorakhnâth's system. Reversal is evident in the style of yoga, where the practitioner has to return the semen, the *bindu,* from the genital level to the top of the head. In the rhetoric of the Nâths, this is represented by 'upside-down' poetry and by the employment of the 'lead' of vernaculars and quotidian themes in order to signify the 'gold' of spiritual truths. The principle of reversal is observable even in the initiatic structure of the Nâth Siddhas, where the young pupil Gorakhnâth replaces (against the traditional custom) the old teacher Matsyendranâth as the ultimate authority.

Finally, at the conclusion of the first chapter, I correlate the principles of esotericism as defined by Antoine Faivre with the yoga of the Nâths. I then demonstrate that all four major and two minor characteristics that are supposed to be essential to Western esotericism have their formal parallels in the theory and practice of yoga. *Correspondences* are observed (the Indian term for them is *bandhu); imagination* is analogous to meditation and visualization; *living nature* is exemplified by *sakti* (which is microcosmically manifested as *kundaliril sakti)* ; and *transmutation* has its counterpart in the practice of reversal *(ulta sddhana).* As for the two minor elements of esotericism, the

[81] **"The Renaissance conceived of the natural and social world as a spiritual organism in which perpetual exchanges of phantasmic messages occurred. That was the principle of magic and of Eros,** *Eros itself being*

transmission of knowledge is in yoga also done through the rituals of initiation, and the fact that similar ideas and practices are also found among Buddhist, Jain, and Muslim esoteric groups points to the presence of the *practice of concordance.* The formal correspondence between these two esoteric traditions is thus both observable and meaningful.

The rest of the work is devoted to contextualizing of the principles of esotericism, through their application as conceptual and methodological tools, in an effort to understand the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh.* In order to facilitate this task, I take the central concept and central practice of the Nath Siddhas to be the anchors of my exposition. The central concept is the *bindu.* It is the most important element in the theory and practice of the *jogis.* I use it as the focus of analysis and the point of departure in subsequent chapters. The central practice is reversal. It provides us with the reason to follow the transmutations of the *bindu,* from its material to its final spiritual form.

I start with the *bindu* at the material level, and in *chapter two* I explore the correspondent issues, the body and sexuality, in accordance with the principles of esotericism and in relation to power. Both body and sexuality have their exoteric and esoteric aspects. For example, sexuality as envisioned by Gorakhnath is either projected inwards, and consists of the 'erotic' (and esoteric) union between Siva and Sakti, or, if it entails the physical act of sex, it involves the retention of semen and renunciation of desire. It is on these points that Gorakh parts ways with his teacher Matsyendranath, and criticizes him for indulging in sex in a manner that neglects these principles.

a form of magic" **Ibid., 221; emphasis added.**

The body, as the locus of the main yogic work, has its esoteric counterpart in the so-called subtle body *(suksm sarif).* I correlate the subtle body and the work done with and upon it to the theory and practice of imagination. In addition, I explore in more detail the thesis that magic, yoga, and eros are compatible categories

The material *bindu,* on its reversed journey toward the head, assumes at the intermediary level of this trajectory the form of the sound and speech. *Chapter three,* therefore, attempts to understand the esoteric aspects of speech and its relation to power through analysis of *The Sayings of Gorakh.* The concepts of *mantra, sabad,* and *ndd* are explored as well as the correlation between speech and *bindu.* It is emphasized that the rhetoric of the Nam Siddhas reflects the general principle of reversal, as exemplified both in the form and content of a number of poems in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* This chapter concludes with the suggestion that esotericism itself may even be understood as a particular mode of discourse.

Following the reversed journey of the *bindu,* we finally arrive at the level of the head, where the *bindu* is transmuted into the elixir, perceived as a light, and psychologically experienced as a bliss of gnosis. *Chapter four,* consequently, engages the issues of ideology, of ethics, and the role of mind in the discipline of yoga. I suggest that the ideology of the yogis is esoteric, among other reasons, because it concerns itself mostly with lineages and gurus, whose importance in esotericism is quintessential. The ethics is, similarly, related to the requirements of yoga and differs from the exoteric morality, exemplified by the *varndsramadharma.* The ideal achievement of the mind developed through the practice of yoga is wisdom, gnosis; it must be pointed out that this is an experiential and not erudite wisdom. And functionally, the mind is employed in the

practice of meditation, which is analogous to what Western esotericism understands as the work of imagination.

In the *concluding chapter,* I argue that the 'translation of cultures' is feasible and that the conceptual assets of esotericism enrich our understanding of yoga. Seen through the lenses of magic, the Naths gain in legibility. I also suggest, with Peter Lamborn Wilson, that esotericism should be seen as a means of cultural transfer. The commensurability between Indian and Western esoteric tradition is explained, in addition to possible historical contacts, through the proposal, advanced by loan Couliano, that the unity of humankind lies in the operations of the human mind. The final chapter is followed by the *Appendix,* which consists of the translation of *The Sayings of Gorakh.*

CHAPTER 1

THE ESOTERIC CULTURE OF THE NATH SIDDHAS:

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I thought it possible to oppose a typological comparison between historically independent phenomena, on one hand, and a more strictly historical analogy on the other ... I have permitted myself to be guided by chance and curiosity, not by a conscious strategy.

Carlo Ginzburg, *Myths, Emblems, Clues*

Let us also now note that a historical survey cannot be contemplated here, both because there is no relevant material for a history of ideas in India and because the Indians themselves - even though they may have disputed against each other - have always been inclined to expound their various systems *sub speciae aeternitatis,* **and not according to their historical unfolding.**

André Padoux,
Vâc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras

Let us start this chapter from the margins. My examples concern Wittgenstein's marginalia on Frazer's classic of 'armchair ethnology,' *The Golden Bough.* Wittgenstein's comments have been the subject of an insightful analysis by Stanley Tambiah in his *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality.*[1] Both Wittgenstein's and Tambiah's remarks are integral to my argument. The crux of the matter lies in the following: In 1931, Wittgenstein made notes on Frazer's book,

[1] **Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah,** *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* **(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Wittgenstein's marginalia are discussed on pp. 54-64. For the full text see A. C. Miles and Rush Rhees, "Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'Remarks on Frazer's** *Golden Bough'," Human World,* **3 (May 1971): 28-41.**

expressing often his irritation at the author's narrow-minded approach to the issue of magic.[2] One of Wittgenstein's criticisms, as commented on by Tambiah, is especially relevant. Tambiah states that "Wittgenstein raises the acute question of 'translation between cultures': if Frazer uses the English words 'ghosts' and 'gods' to represent savage concepts, does this not imply that he is equating these terms with those familiar to him in his own cultural experience as a modern European?" In other words, Wittgenstein is drawing attention to the fact that 'savage concepts,' such as those concerned with magic, are an integral part of our language, which in its turn determines our own mentality and comprises an element of our own culture. He expresses this idea succinctly through the formulation that *"In our language a whole mythology is laid down."*[4] The implication is that Frazer and the 'savage,' the scientist and the magician, share a common ground, that they are related, connected. "In proposing this unity of mankind," comments Tambiah, "Wittgenstein reveals a truth that some of our contemporary philosophers have been trying to articulate: that translation of another culture's conceptions into our linguistic categories necessarily implies a 'shared space,' a 'bridgehead of understanding between the two."[5]

The conviction that magic, or the occult, or esotericism is 'a shared space' between Indian and Western cultural spheres is at the heart of my approach to understanding of the Nam Siddhas and *The Sayings of Gorakh.* I am persuaded that the laws that govern the operational principles of Western and Indian occultism are to a significant degree commensurable. For that reason, I maintain that it is meaningful to correlate the model,

[2] **Wittgenstein writes: "How narrow is the spiritual life for Frazer! Thus, How impossible to understand another life in terms of the English life of his time! Frazer can imagine no priest who is not basically an English parson of our time, with all his stupidity and dullness". In Tambiah,** *Magic, Science, Religion,* **60.**
[3] **Ibid., 61.**

developed in the study of Western esotericism, with its Indian counterpart. What follows will then be the test of my proposal that it makes sense to look at the yoga of Gorakhnath and his followers through the lenses of esotericism / occultism / magic.

The comparability between Indian and Western esotericism is rarely argued or emphasized in scholarship. My conclusion is that the reason for this attitude lies in a lingering feeling of embarrassment surrounding the category of the occult. The category is still marginal. It reveals a collective blind spot that so many scholars have noted an element of magic / occult in the make-up of tantra[6] yet almost no one has taken pains to explain what it is. For that reason, in order to throw as much light as possible on that spot, I am going to engage in what otherwise might seem an excessively detailed and lengthy clarification of the fundamental principles of esotericism. I do so out of the conviction that the category is essential for understanding of the thoughts and actions of the Nath Siddhas and the message of *The Sayings of Gorakh.* Because of its importance and insufficient familiarity, I propose to tackle the issue from three angles.

I will commence with the definitions of esotericism and the occult advanced by the sociologist Edward Tiryakian. They are in overall agreement with Faivrian model, but are also well suited for initial considerations because of their more general nature and loose structure. Tiryakian's definitions are useful in order to make as aware of the heuristic distinction between esoteric theory and occult practice. Secondly, I will probe the essential features of magic and alchemy. While Tiryakian deals with general principles, magic and alchemy are specific occult disciplines that are especially relevant

[4] **Ibid., 63. Italics as in the original.**
[5] **Ibid.**

in approaching the phenomenon of the Nath Siddhas. Lastly, I will correlate the yoga of the Naths with the model of esotericism as proposed by Antoine Faivre, the subject matter of which has now hopefully become more familiar. In each of these three avenues of engagement with the principles of esoteric doctrine and occult practice I will be substantiating my arguments by providing pertinent examples from *The Sayings of Gorakh.*

THE OCCULT AND ESOTERICISM: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

In an influential article,[7] American sociologist Edward A. Tiryakian has offered some comprehensive and well-informed definitions of the terms 'occult' and 'esoteric'.[8] Tiryakian's insights, which are in general agreement with the Faivrian model, seem a perfect point of departure in order to understand the Nâth Siddhas in the light of these concepts. Let us first see how he defines the occult:

> By "occult" I understand intentional practices, techniques, or procedures which *(a)* draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature or the cosmos that cannot be measured or recognized by the instruments of modern science, and *(b)* which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without this intervention. ... To go on further, insofar as the subject of occult

[6] **For example, André Padoux comments that "In an early but still interesting study, H. von Glasenapp** *very aptly* **defined Tantrism as 'eine universale Weltaschauung sakraler Magie' (Tantrismus und Saktismus,'** *Ostasiatishe Zeitschrift,* **neue Folge, b. 12, 1936, pp. 120-33)". In Padoux,** *Vâc,* **37, n.18; emphasis added.**

[7] **Edward A. Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," in** *American Journal of Sociology* **78 (November 1972): 491-512. The article was subsequently reprinted in** *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult,* **ed. Edward A. Tiryakian (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 257-80. My references are to the latter source. The importance of Tiryakian's conceptualizations is also indicated by the fact that Antoine Faivre utilized his definitions in the article on occultism that was included in** *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* **16 vols, ed. in chief Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987). Faivre's article was reprinted in** *Hidden Truths,* **3-9.**

[8] **"The distinction between esotericism and occultism did not really enter the vocabulary until the middle of the nineteenth century...". Faivre,** *Access to Western Esotericism,* **34.**

> activity is not just any actor, but one who has acquired specialized knowledge and skills necessary for the practices in question, and insofar as these skills are learned and transmitted in socially (but not publicly available) organized, routinized, and ritualized fashion, we can speak of these practices as occult sciences or occult arts.
>
> Commonly recognized occult practices include a variety of phenomena, such as those designated as "magic"[9] and divinatory practices, which are very numerous cross-culturally...; they also include practices which are oriented to changing the physical nature of nonhuman objects by the active participation or ego involvement of the subject, as in the case of alchemy.[1]

An important aspect of the occult is that it represents a certain mode of *praxis,* certain form of activity. In this context, it is interesting to note that "in India the word which best corresponds to our word ritual is *karman,* action; sympathetic magic is the *factum, krtya,* par excellence."[11] This practical orientation does not mean, however, that magic and alchemy, for example, as occult disciplines or sciences, do not posses their own particular set of theoretical notions, their ideology. As Antoine Faivre reminds us, "occultism, in the most precise sense of the word, necessarily includes a form of theory."[12] But juxtaposed in relation to the concept of esotericism, the occult may justifiably be defined as a set of practical methods and techniques.

According to Faivre, each occult discipline "has its own method, but the laws establishing them rest on an identical principle ... Essentially this is the homo-analogical principle *matching like to like,* and this means *one of the two can act on the other.* This occurs by virtue of 'correspondences' that unite all visible things and likewise unite the

[9] **"Parlor tricks or stage magic is not meant here, but rather such practices as sorcery, witchcraft, ritual or ceremonial magic, and the like." Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 278, n.9.**

[10] **Ibid., 265.**

[11] **Mauss,** *Theory of Magic,* **19.**

[12] **Antoine Faivre, "What is Occultism?", in** *Hidden Truths,* **4.**

[13] **This is also roughly equivalent to the Indian notion of** *sidhana.*

latter with invisible realities."[14] We have already encountered the concept of correspondences on several occasions; they are at the root of esoteric thinking and represent the foundational principle of occult practices. Their importance is clearly paramount.

The broader field of esotericism provides the theoretical foundation and elaboration of the principles upon which the occult practices rest. This is how Tiryakian defines the concept of esotericism:

> By "esoteric" I refer to those religiophilosophic belief systems which underlie occult techniques and practices; that is, it refers to the more comprehensive cognitive mappings of nature and cosmos, the epistemological and ontological reflections of ultimate reality, which mappings constitute a stock of knowledge that provides the ground for occult procedures. By way of analogy, esoteric knowledge is to occult practices as the corpus of theoretical physics is to engineering applications. But a crucial aspect of esoteric knowledge is that it is a secret knowledge of the reality of things, of hidden truths, handed down, frequently orally and not all at once, to a relatively small number of persons who are typically ritually initiated by those already holding this knowledge. Moreover, it should be added, this knowledge is not of a detached or objective sort about an outer reality which stands against the observer as this page stands against the reader; esoteric knowledge is of a participatory sort, namely a knowledge (or gnosis) of the meaning of the world to human existence, in the progressive realization of which the subject develops internally and liberates himself from the strictures of everyday life.[1]

Again, one needs to emphasize that the clear-cut division between the categories of the occult and esoteric is not possible and that although esotericism represents the theoretical foundation, "it must be recognized that esotericism itself also has a practical dimension. It is not pure speculation, since the active knowledge, enlightenment and imagination that

Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism,* **34. Emphases added.**
[15] **Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 265-6.**

constitute it correspond to a form of praxis."[16] For practical purposes, however, it seems beneficial to maintain the heuristic division between esotericism as a form of thought (theory) and the occult as a mode of practical application (praxis) of this theoretic substructure

In order to contextualize the above presented generalizations, I now propose to apply Tiryakian's definitions of the terms 'occult' and 'esoteric,' trusting that their semantic field has now become more familiar, to the phenomenon of the Nam Siddhas. My intention at this place is to break apart into smaller units the elements of his definitions (which are of general nature) and to investigate if they are applicable to the theory and practice of the *jog Is.* Is it justifiable, in other words, to approach the Nath yogis through the conceptual framework of the occult and esoteric?

THE NATH SIDDHAS AND THE OCCULT

Let us start this section with the analysis of Tiryakian's definition of the occult and its application on the practices of the Siddhas. As we have seen, the occult is understood in reference to those "intentional practices, techniques, or procedures which … draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature or the cosmos..." Now, the basic model of yogic *sadhana* as envisioned by the Naths consists of a set of exercises aimed at the manipulation of the currents of energy, understood in their spiritual meaning, within the human body. For example, yogis perform breathing practices *(pranayam)* in particular posture *(asari),* aided by visualization and mantra chanting, in order to 'wake up' the

[16] **Faivre, "What is Occultism," 3-4.**
[17] **Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 265.**

kundalini force, imagined as a coiled serpent situated at the base of the spine.[18] According to White,

> In every human body, the female *kundalini* serpent sleeps coiled ... It is only in the body of a yogin that she is ever awakened, and her awakening corresponds precisely to the initiation of the yogin's progressive withdrawal into total yogic integration *(samadhi)* ... On a more concrete level, it is the rise of the *kundalini* that brings about the transmutation of the raw semen into nectar in the cranial vault...[19]

Additional information is in place here if the above quotation is to be properly understood. The Nath Siddhas believe that the cranial vault, for which they use code words such as *gagan mandal* ('heavenly circle'), *sunya* ('emptiness', 'empty'), or the 'Moon,' is the locus of the elixir *(amrt, ras)* which, in ordinary circumstances, drips down through the spinal column until it gets destroyed by the 'Sun' in the gastric fire and through the seminal emission. This process is the principal cause of aging and death, and its reversal - set up, for example, through the process of *kundalini yoga* mentioned in the above quotation - makes possible the achievements of both metaphysical and practical goals. That is to say, the Nath yogis attain the spiritual goal of yoga *{samadhi)* as well as the practical goal of acquisition of the elixir of longevity and immortality by 'drawing upon hidden or concealed forces [in this case, the *kundalini]* in nature or the cosmos'. It should also be obvious from this example that the practices of yoga "have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as ... altering [the course of events] from what they would have been without this intervention."[20] For in doing the above, a

[18] **For more information about this subject, see the classic study by Lilian Silburn,** *Kundalini: The Energy of the Depths* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1988), especially pp. 121-33, which deal with the Nathist conceptions and practices.**

[19] **White,** *Alchemical Body,* **218.**

[20] **Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 265.**

yogi "rejuvenates himself - growing younger instead of older - and realizes all manner of other powers that flaunt the laws of nature, culminating in bodily immortality."[71]

Let us continue the examination of this particular, in many respects essential, practice of the Siddhas and let us see some of its reflections in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* There are many allusions in the *sabads* and *pads* of this poetry to the system of *cakras* within the human body, and to the various experiences connected to the waking and rising of the *kundalini,* its way upward towards the 'Moon' in the head of the yogi, and to the yogi's drinking of the elixir (and the foolishness of those who allow the semen, the *bindu,* to be wasted instead of transmuted into *amrt).* Here are some examples:

"In the circle of the sky, there is an upside-down well. / There is the residence of nectar. / Who has a guru can drink it all. / Who is without a guru remains thirsty."[23] This *sabad* is, to a large degree, self-explanatory: it is safe to assume that the 'upside-down well' refers to the uppermost *cakra* in the human body, from which the nectar drips down continually. In the case of ordinary people, the nectar is wasted, while yogis strive to preserve it through celibacy and yogic practices. The second part of the *sabad* refers to the importance of the spiritual teacher, a precept that is ubiquitously met in yogic and tantric literature, and which does not require further commentary. Note, however, the element of spiritual elitism in the second half of the *sabad.* The elitism, and the sense of supremacy and power that stem from it, consists of two mutually related facts or existential situations: having a teacher and having the result of practice. And while

[21] **White, "Wonders of Sri Mastnath," 400.**

[22] **1 have to acknowledge the fact that my commentaries related to the meaning of the esoteric imagery in** *The Sayings of Gorakh* **are in general influenced by the editorial glosses of Pitambardat Barthwal (who edited and commented in Hindi upon the original text) and by the oral commentaries of Dr. Shukdev Singh with whom I translated these verses. These two scholars are not responsible, however, for the possible mistakes and misunderstandings that may arise from my exegetical attempts.**

having a teacher is an objectively verifiable (i.e., exoteric) fact, the drinking of the nectar is an esoteric claim based on the performance of the occult practice.

"Having drunk the downward-flowing nectar of immortality /1 have pierced the six petals. / There I, Sri Gorakh-rai, / Have seen the Moon without moonlight." Again, this is a *sabad* with a rather transparent meaning. The piercing of the 'six petals' is a reference to the six *cakras*[25] along the spinal column through which the *kundalini* passes on her upward journey towards the 'Moon' in the head. The fact that this 'Moon' is without moonlight indicates that it should be understood in its spiritual and not literal meaning. As for the value of the experience resulting from meditations on the *cakras,* its importance is paramount. Work on the *cakras* is a yogic practice *par excellence* and their description is a leitmotif in tantric and yogic literature. As Kalyani Mallik asserts, "Concentration on the nerve-centres known as *Cakras,* confers on the Yogi superhuman powers."[26] It is also interesting to note that Gorakhnath refers to himself both by using the (usually religious) honorific Sri and by calling himself the 'king' (rai), as if in reference to both the spiritual and temporal importance of his achievement.

"The reversed *sakti* rises to *brahmand; I* The breath plays throughout the body, from the toes to the topknot. / The reversed Moon eclipses Rahu. / This is a sign of successs, says the sage Gorakh."[97] In this *sabad,* the emphasis is on the process of

GBS 23. "gagan mandal maim ümdhä kübä tahäm ammrt kä bäsä / sagurä hoi su bhari bhari pTvai nigurä jäi piyäsä."

[24] **GBS 171. "nlmjhar jharnai ammlmras pTvanäm sat dal dekhyä jäi / cand bihümnäm cändinäm tahäm dekhyä srl gorakhräi."**

[25] **On the subject of** *cakras* **in this context, see, for example, an interesting and informative essay "The System of Cakras According to Goraksanätha," in Gopinath Kaviraj,** *Notes on Religion and Philosophy* **(Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 1987), 47-55.**

[26] **Mallik,** *Siddha-Sidhänta-Paddhati,* **37.**

[27] **GBS 217. "ultT sakti carhai brahmand nakh sakh pavanäm khelai sarbang / ulti candra räh küm grahai sidh sänket jatl gorakh kahai." In order to maintain the rhyme, the first verse should end with 'sarbang khelai."**

reversal *(ulta sadhari),* by which "the yogi succeeds in reversing the natural trends of aging, disease, and death, and channels his energy, seed, and breath upward, against the normal flow of bodily process."[98] Not only does the energy, the *sakti,* move upwards towards the uppermost *cakra* (referred to as the *brahmind),* and not only does the breath move up 'from the toes to the topknot', but even the Moon eclipses the demon Rahu, reversing in this manner the ordinary course of events in which it is Rahu who swallows the Moon, causing its eclipse. This signifies that the yogi has changed and liberated himself from the course of ordinary events - a 'sign of success'. (The *ulta sadhan,* a process often designated by the metaphorical expression as 'reversing the *nadt*[90] and its concomitant vocabulary and imagery of the 'revaluation of all values' is most notably referred to in the *pad* section of *The Sayings of Gorakh* and it will be treated more comprehensively in the chapter on rhetoric, i.e. the 'esotericism of the speech.')

Let us proceed now by analyzing further components of occult practices. The subject of these practices is, according to Tiryakian, "not just any actor, but one who has acquired specialized knowledge and skills ... learned and transmitted in socially (but not publicly available) organized, routinized, and ritualized fashion Here, again, it is obvious that this element, namely the initiation, represents a *sine qua non* of the yogic way of life and practice. The Nath Siddhas are an initiatic order and the knowledge of yoga is transmitted only to those candidates who have undergone this ritual. After the initiation, the novices are invested with the large earrings which are the distinctive mark of the *jogis* and due to which custom they are often called the 'split-eared' or *kanphata yogis.* Briggs describes this aspect of the initiation as follows:

[28] **White, "Wonders of Sri Mastnath," 400.**
[29] **Ibid.**

> In the final stage of their ceremony of initiation a specially chosen *guru,* or teacher, splits the central hollows of both ears with a two-edged knife (or razor). The slits are plugged with sticks of *nim-wood;* and, after the wounds have healed, large rings *(mudra)* are inserted. These are a symbol of the Yogi's faith. Some explain that in splitting the ear a *nadi* (mystic channel) in the cartilege is cut, thus assisting in the acquirement of yogic power. The Yogi, wearing the mudra, becomes immortal.[31]

The initiation itself is preceded, as might be expected, by a period of testing the candidates. "The candidate is first closely confined for a period ranging from forty days to three to six months ... During this time the candidate is tried as to his resolution and ability to carry through his undertaking."[32] This testing is an obvious indication of the selective nature of the order: it is not meant for everybody, nor is it a public event. The candidate must prove himself or herself worthy of initiation, for initiation gives access to power. Subsequently, after the trial is successfully completed, there comes a fast of few days. The candidate then bathes and brings gifts for the guru. The candidate takes the vow, is given instructions, and, most importantly, he or she receives the *mantra.* After that, the novice receives the robe, followed by the ceremonial shaving of the hair. At the end of ceremony, there follows a feast.[33] The supreme significance of the initiation is appropriately indicated by the statement from Malik Muhammad Jaisi's *Padmdvati,* 22.8., "Now you are perfect, having received initiation: the mildew has been cleared away from the mirror of your body."[34]

It is obvious that the actual process of initiation is not openly described in the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh,* this being a secret affair. In a general sense, the

[30] **Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 265.**
[31] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,* **6.**
[32] **Ibid., 28.**
[33] **See ibid., 28-9.**

importance of the initiation is indicated on numerous occasions where the necessity of having a guru is emphasized, for the guru is the one who performs the ceremony and transmits the teaching. Here are some verses that refer to the initiation and the benefits stemming from it:

"Realize Sada-Siva in the *akas4attva* / Inside it is the *nirvan-pad.* / Who becomes intimate with the body through initiation, / For him there is no more coming-and-going."[if] In this *sabad,* the expression 'coming-and-going' refers to the process of life and death, in other words, to *samsar,* the realm of the false reality. The *sabad* refers to initiation as an opening into the knowledge of the secret aspect of the body, through the mastery of which, freedom from the continuous rounds of births and deaths is secured. It is an axiom of yogic lore that the human body is a potential instrument of liberation and of the acquisition of power, once its secrets are learned and mastered through appropriate practices. As the verse from *The Sayings of Gorakh* declares rather bluntly, "The unexamined body is a useless pit. / In the end, it will be [but] a burden." In a Sanskrit text attributed to Gorakhnath, the *Gorak$a Sataka,* the importance of the proper (esoteric) knowledge of the body is expressed in the following verses:

> How can Yogis, who do not know the six centres *(cakra),* the sixteen props *(adhara),* the 3,00,000 ('channels,' *nadi)* (and) the five sheaths *iyyomd)* in their (own) body, attain perfection (in Yoga)?
>
> How can those Yogis, who do not know their own body (as) a house of one column (with) nine doors, and (as presided over by) five tutelary divinities, attain perfection (in Yoga)?[37]

- *Padmavati,* **134.**

[35] **GBS 168. "äkäs tat sadä-siv jämn / tasi abhiantari pad nirbämn / pyamde parcämnai gurmukhi joi / bähuhi äbä gavan na hoi."**

[36] **GBS 216. "aparcai pind bhikhyä khät hai anti käli hoygä bhärl."**

[37] *Goraksa Sataka, 13-14.* **Trans, in Briggs,** *Gorakhnäth,* **287-8.**

The value and power of the initiation is also described in the following verses from *The Sayings of Gorakh:* "O you, who turn towards heart, receive initiation from the guru! / Give up flesh and blood into the mouth of fire! / Cast off the elements [i.e. blood and semen] of mother and father! / Whosoever is like this, is able to summon God."[38] And, in a similar vein: "Where there is hope, there is disappointment; / And where there is doubt, there is sorrow. / These cannot be avoided without initiation. / Both are great ills."[39] The most explicit reference to the teaching related to the way of life to be led subsequent to initiation are offered in the following set of precepts from the *pad* section of *The Sayings of Gorakh:*

> This is the initiation sermon given by Sri Gorakh Raya
> Who has reformed the four worldly classes. [Refrain]
>
> Study yourself!
> Distinguish between proper and improper law!
> Know the mystery of mysteries!
> Fulfil hopes and expectations!
>
> In the middle of a difficult juncture
> Perform five *sandhya* prayers at the proper times.
> You should remain at the tenth door
> And serve the feet of the Formless One.
>
> Chant the *ajapa* chant,
> Consider your own self.
> Let go of all crutches;
> There is neither virtue nor sin there.
>
> Fix yourself in meditation day and night.
> You should rejoice in the eternal Ram.
> Gorakhnath speaks this wisdom:
> I have found the supreme treasure.[40]

[38] **GBS 180. "man mukhi jata guru mukhi lehu / lohl mas agni mukhi dehu / mat pita kl metau dhat / aisa hoi bulavai nath."**
[39] **GBS 235. "je asa to apadaje samsa to sog / guru mukhi bina na bhajasTye dunyom bar rog."**
[40] *Gorakh Bam, pad* **33. "aisa re upades dakhai sri gorakh raya, jini jag catur baran rah laya /tek/. parhilai sasamved / karilai bidhi nakhed / jamnilai bhedamnbhed / purilai asa umed** *III* **bikhmT sandhi samjhan /**

As a general conclusion, I trust that the above examples have demonstrated that initiation represents an essential aspect of the yogic way of life as envisioned by the Nath Siddhas. The secrets of yoga, the proper way of practice, the transmission of the *mantra* to a disciple, all these elements that make the actual *sadhana* meaningful and possible are dependant on the successfully underwent ritual of initiation. In the words of Douglas Brooks, "The Tantric takes for granted that his Tantric initiation is a privileged destiny; he holds himself above others in the sense of having reached a stage in the cycles of rebirth that he believes is final."[41] David Gordon White, writing about his personal quest in India relates that "the few Nath Siddhas who struck me as genuine practitioners of the *hatha yoga* taught by Gorakhnath made it clear that they would be willing to divulge their secrets to me only after a long period of discipleship."[42] It follows, then, that to the degree that initiation is a vital component of occult practice, it is justifiable to understand the Siddhas as an occult phenomenon. Let us see now to what extent it is appropriate to refer to their theory as an esoteric one. Again, I will break apart Tiryakian's general definition of the concept and apply its constitutive elements to the Naths.

samjhaya pancau vakhat sari / rahiba dasvai duvari / seiba pad nirakar *111* **japilai ajapajap / bicarilai apai ap / chutila sabai biyap / lipai nahTm taham puni pap** *111* **aho nisi sama dhyamn / nirantar rameba ram / kathai gorakhnath gyarnn / paiya param nidhamn /4/." (The subsequent references to the** *pads* **will be abbreviated as GBP)**

[41] **Brooks,** *Secret of the Three Cities,* **135.**

[42] **White,** *Alchemical Body,* **xi. In the light of these remarks, the 'objective' scholarship conducted by a non-initiated 'outsider' is, by necessity and at its best, just an educated guess. On the epistemological and ethical problems inherent in the study of secret societies and esoteric lore see also Hugh B. Urban,** *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* **(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 15-28.**

THE NATH SIDDHAS AND ESOTERICISM

Tiryakian defines esotericism as a set of belief systems that refer to the "cognitive mappings of nature and cosmos, the epistemological and ontological reflections of ultimate reality" that function as "the ground for occult procedures."[43] In this respect, the central feature of the Nath Siddhas' ideology is, arguably, the claim that the human body is a replica, a *microcosm,* of the ontological plenum, the *macrocosm.* To the degree that Siddhas share the general outlook of Saiva tantrics, the *macrocosm* is understood as the result of the dynamic relationship between Siva and Sakti; to the degree that their theory is esoteric, these two divinities are assumed to be present within the human body, together with the other constitutive elements of the universe, both metaphysical and phenomenological. The yogic interiorization of alchemical practices is also justified and made possible through the application of the above model: the external and the internal are related and correspondent to each other. The principal dictum that establishes correlation between external alchemy and internal yogic practices is based on the claim "best summed up in a classic aphorism from the foundational *Rasarnava* [17.165a]; *yatha lohe thatha dehe,* "as in metal, so in the body.""[44] I will treat the correspondence between universe and human body more extensively in due course; let it suffice at this point to make an observation of the general sort: the basic ideological stance of the Nath Siddhas is, in its nature, in essential agreement with the esoteric modes of thinking.

A crucial aspect of esoteric knowledge is that it is imparted and transmitted "frequently orally and not all at once, to a relatively small number of persons who are

Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 265.
White, *Alchemical Body,* **5.**

typically ritually initiated by those already holding this knowledge." The practice of initiation among the Siddhas has already been discussed. It needs to be added that, "Initiation is divided, roughly, into two stages... An initiate in the first stage is called an Aughar; in the second stage he becomes a full-fledged Yogi."[46] This fact of the two-stage initiation confirms the custom of handing down esoteric knowledge 'not all at once.' In *The Saying of Gorakh* the interlocutor is habitually addressed as an *avadhut,* which in this context presumably refers to a stage of discipleship; the adepts are usually designated as *naths* or *siddhas.* And the yogic lore is a secret knowledge: even when it is openly expressed, its full meaning and impact remains epistemologically opaque for those who lack the immediate experience of the realities spoken about. In the words of Gorakhnath, "Only rare yogis understand these verses."[47]

Finally, "esoteric knowledge is of a participatory sort, namely a knowledge (or gnosis) of the meaning of the world to human existence, in the progressive realization of which the subject develops internally and liberates himself from the strictures of everyday life."[48] There are many references in *The Sayings of Gorakh* to the illuminating experiences of liberation that result from the practice of yoga. For example, "Niranjan Nath is proclaiming: / 'My comings and goings are over! / Searching the body and the universe, /1 obtained all the *siddhis.*"[49] These experiences, which confer gnostic insights into the nature of reality, are clearly not of a discursive kind and are thus beyond the reach of pundits who rely on the bookish knowledge: "Read, read, read - so many have

[45] **Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 265.**
[46] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,* **27.**
[47] **GBS 6. "te pad jamnarn birlajogT."**
[48] **Tiryakian, "Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 265-6.**
[49] **GBP 23: Refrain, "aum nahlm jaum niranjan nath kl duhaT/ pyand brahmand khojamta, amhe sab sidhi pal"**

thus died; / Speak, speak, speak - what has been achieved in such a way? / Going on and on and on - so many bodies have gone / Without realizing *parabrahman*"[50] The yogic knowledge is gnostic and secret; it transcends the phenomenal world and probes into the reality that is beyond: "Thinking arises from the unthinkable; / Thinking troubles the whole world. / The yogi forgets the thinking, / And immerses [himself] into unthinkable."[51] And the ultimate effect of this illuminating knowledge is that it liberates one from 'the strictures of everyday life' which, within the context of the Indian cultural universe, and its spiritual expectations, means that one who has obtained this knowledge is freed from the continuing rounds of births and deaths, from *samsar.* Gorakhnath proclaims this almost triumphantly: "Above the nose, in between the eyebrows, /1 remain fixed day and night. / I will not return to birth in mother's womb, /1 will not suck the milk again!"

So far, I have treated esotericism and the occult in general. At this point, I would like to engage in the clarification of magic and alchemy, which are two specific occult disciplines that are of critical importance for understanding of the Nath Siddhas. We are often told that the *jogis* are involved in magical and alchemical practices, but the general principles of these disciplines are rarely elaborated. Here again, as throughout, I am assuming that the operative principles of esoteric thought and occult practices are cross-culturally valid and consistent.

GBS 248. "parhi parhi parhi keta muva kathi kathi kathi kaha klnh / barhi barhi barhi bahu ghat gaya parabrahm nahTm clnh."

[51] **GBS 244. "cyant acyant hi upajai cyanta sab jug khln / jogT cyanta blsarai tau hoi acyantahi Hn."**

MAGIC

It seemed an opportune strategic move to focus on the theoretical elaboration of the concept of magic *after* some basic understanding of the occult and esotericism has been established. My principle thesis is that the *sidhana* of the Náth yogis may be understood as a form of occult practice and that their 'theory' may be understood as a mode of esoteric thought. I would now like to concentrate on the elaboration of the concept of magic as a particular occult discipline: its definitions and the foundational principles. I have to emphasize again that it is not possible to draw a clear demarcation line between the concepts of magic and the occult, especially since the usage varies with different authors. As a general principle, magic is to be understood as a more inclusive category, as a *particular* occult discipline (the others being alchemy, astrology, divination - to name the most important).

It is rather difficult to define with taxonomie certainty what magic really is. Individual, theological, and, yes, scholarly bias is responsible for this confusion to a great extent, for the word magic has a long history of pejorative use, and its application is often but a declaration of the dismissal of something as a mere superstition.[54] Richard King, following Grace Jantzen, has argued that a definition is also a "conceptual site of a

GBS 275. "nasika agre bhru mandale, ahanis rahiba thiram / mata garbhi na ayba, bahuri na plyba khiram."

[53] **Naomi Janowitz, in her study of magical practices in late antiquity, asserts: "This study build on the growing consensus that such labels as 'magic are inseparable from their pejorative use in the past."** *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity* **(University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), xiv. She consequently discards the label, which is one of the possible ways to look at the issue from a novel and respectful perspective (and obviously, not the methodological choice I follow in this study).**

[54] **Janowitz reminds us of the fact that "In addition to the negative associations, the practice of magic was a criminal offence under Roman law (Iulius Paulus** *Excerpts* **5.23.14-18). To be accused of practicing magic had all the drama of modern charges of high treason and could have lethal results."** *Icons of Power,* **2.**

historical struggle for power and authority" and this is evidently true in the case of magic, especially in the Western hemisphere.[56] One can generalize that the authority and power of the Church, for example, put the sign of equation between magic and heresy, while for Science, magic meant but a domain of the irrational.[57] At this particular moment in history, magic is undergoing a phase of renewed scholarly interest. Instead of being treated in evolutionary terms a la James Frazer, or as an outdated forerunner of science a la Lynn Thorndike, it is now becoming increasingly evident that magic represents a genuine mode of religious life that is both historically enduring and cross-culturally ubiquitous. But the precise definition of the term is still problematic, and the category remains marginal. As Michael D, Swartz explains,

Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'* **(London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 9 and** *passim.* **King is referencing Grace Jantzen,** *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* **(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).**

[56] **Olof Petersson's comment addresses the issue eloquently: "the debate over the relationship between magic and religion is a discussion of an artificial problem created by defining religion on the pattern of Christianity. The elements of man's beliefs and ceremonies which did not coincide with the ideal type of religion were - and are - called magic. Magic became - and still becomes - a refuse heap for the elements which are not sufficiently 'valuable' to get a place within religion." Peterson, "Magic-Religion: Some Marginal Notes to an Old Problem,"** *Ethnos* **22 (1957), 109. Qtd. in John G. Gager, "Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Counter-Culture?"** *Helios,* **Vol. 21,2 (Autumn 1994), 183.**

[57] **Several authors have opined that Western Church, science, and magic definitely separated in the course of seventeenth century. For the thesis that magic, understood as an integral part of Renaissance culture, becomes marginalized by the advent of Protestant culture, Catholic Counter-Reformation, and secular science, see Couliano,** *Eros and Magic.* **According to him, this process is effected through the censorship and "rejection of the** *imaginary* **on the ground of principle" (222). Stanley Tambiah also claims that there is a link between the rise of Protestantism and science on the one hand, and the rejection of magic on the other. This fact had a direct influence on the development of anthropology and the study of religion. He writes, "It is my submission that this emphasis on religion as a system of beliefs, and the distinction between prayer and spell, the former being associated with 'religious' behaviour and the latter with 'magical' acts, was a Protestant legacy which was automatically taken over by later Victorian theorists like Tylor and Frazer, and given a universal significance as both historical and analytical categories useful in tracing the intellectual development from savagery to civilization." Tambiah,** *Magic, Science, Religion,* **19.**

For the long history of the relationship between science and magic see, for example, Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and the Experimental Science,* **8 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923-58). Thorndike's study is monumental in its scope, but dated in its approach and conclusions. In this connection, it is interesting to note that even such quintessential representatives of the scientific thought as René Descartes and Isaac Newton cultivated interest in the occult. For the latter, see Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs,** *The Foundation's of Newton's Alchemy or "The Hunting of the Greene Lyon "* **(London: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Divorce between science and magic is also a subject of Tambiah's** *Magic, Science, Religion.*

> Contemporary students of religion have questioned the applicability of the term magic, and a satisfactory definition has not been formulated. Much of the controversy surrounding the term magic has focused on how the notion of magic is applied to traditional, non-Western societies. Bound up with this issue is the question of whether there is something intrinsic called 'magic' that can be separated from 'religion,' and whether this dichotomy presupposes an evolutionary view that sees those societies that employ 'magic' as inferior.[58]

In order to distinguish magic from other occult disciplines - and they all share general theoretical background in esoteric mode of thought as defined by Faivre - we have to take into consideration three elements.

1. First of all, magic is characterized by its orientation toward power. Georg Luck, a scholar of the Greek and Roman magic, defines it as "a technique grounded in a belief in powers located in the human soul and in the universe outside ourselves, a technique that aims at imposing the human will on nature or on human beings by using supersensual powers. Ultimately, it may be a belief in the unlimited powers of the soul."[59] The key words here are 'power' and 'will'. It is a common perception that magic has an active quality and this is most often the element that distinguishes it from mysticism or conventional religion, which are perceived to be more passive. In simplified terms, the magician imposes his will for the purpose of expected change, while a mystic or a faithful surrenders himself or herself to the will of God. As Richard Kieckhefer comments, "According to this approach, the central feature of religion is that it

Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* **(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 19-20.**

[59] **Luck,** *Arcana Mundi,* **3.**

supplicates God or the gods, and the main characteristic of magic is that it *coerces* spiritual beings or forces."[60]

Teun Goudriaan, who wrote the only major scholarly monograph on Indian magic, equally asserts that "The essence of magic is a grasp for power."[61] As soon as this is realized, the comparison between the principles of magic and the yoga of the Nam Siddhas, whose whole practice is defined by the search for power (the *siddhis),* should emerge as obvious and meaningful. Power is related to action, to agency, to doing things, and this practical orientation is congenial to magic. In a similar spirit, Goudriaan and Gupta define magic as "the performance of certain ritual acts - and the belief in the efficacy of such acts - with a view of making use of certain natural laws of cause and effect which are supposed to exist, in order to enforce some result(s) in the mundane sphere desired by the performer or his instructor." Let us also recall that, in Sanskrit, one of the words for magic is *karman.* Magic is therefore a way of action based on the theoretical assumptions of esotericism that is directed toward acquisition of power.

In order to properly understand the nature of power as it is pursued in magic, additional qualification is needed. In magic, as Marcel Mauss has shown, power is approached as the sacred, or as the manifestation of the sacred. In Eliadean terms, in magic, power has the quality of *hierophany,* or even of *theophany.* This is an extremely important qualification and magic is not properly understood unless this is realized. The consequences of this insight are weighty. Succinctly stated, this means that it is possible,

[60] **Richard Kieckhefer,** *Magic in the Middle Ages* **(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [1st ed. 1989]), 15; emphases in the original. I should add that Kieckhefer doubts the usefulness of this division.**

[61] **Teun Goudriaan,** *Maya Divine and Human: A Study of Magic and Its Religious Foundations in Sanskrit Texts, with Particular Attention to a Fragment on Visnu's Maya Preeserved in Bali* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 58.**

[62] **This point is debatable.**

in the final analysis, to understand magical acts as acts of devotion for they are intended with the aim of participation in the sacred that is understood and approached as power. When a Nath yogi wants to acquire the *siddhis* and become 'a second Siva' he or she wants to have a share in these powers because they are prerogative of the Great Lord. In this sense, if we want to reconceptualize the category of religion and to move away from focusing on the issues of holy book, doctrine, and belief, we should be able to consider magic as a genuine manifestation of religious drive, distinct from other forms only in its chosen approach but not in dignity and seriousness, as it is often implied.

The sacral character of power in the system of the Nath yogis is reflected in the orientation towards *siddhis,* which are on one hand miraculous powers pursued as such, while on the other hand they reveal that their possessor, the *siddha,* resembles the Great Lord through his omnipotence. Siva himself is revered as the master of yogic powers. Finally, the sacred nature of power is related to the concept of *sakti,* which is understood both as the manifest universe outwardly, and as the *kundaliril sakti* esoterically present within the human body.

2. The second major constitutive element of magic, its basic operative force, is imagination. According to Couliano's definition, "The magic that concerns us here is theoretically *a science of the imaginary,* which it explores through its own methods and seeks to manipulate at will."[64] If the system of correspondences represents the theoretical foundation of magic, its working mechanism - the faculty that makes the desired change effective - is the power of imagination. According to Faivre, "It is the imagination that allows the use of these intermediaries, symbols, and images to develop a gnosis, to

[63] **Teun Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta,** *Hindu Tantric andSakta Literature* **(Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), 112.**

penetrate the hieroglyphs of Nature, *to put the theory of correspondences into active practice* and to uncover, to see, and to know the mediating entities between Nature and the divine world."[65]

The work of Henry Corbin[66] is of vital importance for understanding the principles of the theory of imagination (his context is mainly, but not exclusively, Islamic mysticism). He is also credited with the introduction of the term *mundus imaginalis.* In very simplified terms, the basic postulate of the theory of imagination (as understood esoterically) is that it is the *medium,* the link that connects spiritual and human realms. (Accordingly, the *mundus imaginalis* represents a 'middle earth' between these two, what Paul Mus calls *mesocosm).* The system of correspondences is static in itself; it is only through the medium of active, or creative, imagination that the mechanism begins to operate, to work.

Couliano's study of magic also gives a prominent place to the concept of the imaginary. According to his research, ancient authors (Aristotle being, as usual, the great systematizer and authority) conceived of the imagination as a faculty that makes possible communication (or mediation) between spiritual and corporeal realities. "For the soul has no ontological aperture through which it can look down, while the body is only a form of organization of natural elements ... On the other hand, the body opens up to the soul a window to the world through the five sensory organs...". In other words, imagination is a link between two distinct worlds that would otherwise be inaudible to each other and as

[64] **Ibid., xviii. Emphasis added.**
[65] **Faivre,** *Access,* **12; emphasis added.**
[66] **See, for example, Henry Corbin,** *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabi. With a New Preface by Harold Bloom.* **Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997 (1969);** *Spiritual Body and Terrestrial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shl'ite Iran,* **trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1977);** *The Voyage and the Messenger: Iran and Philosophy,* **trans. Joseph Rowe (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1998);** *et al.*

such it was the root and medium "of all the phantasmic processes of Renaissance: Eros, the Art of Memory,[69] theoretical magic, alchemy and practical magic."[70]

In magic, therefore, the power of imagination is that which makes possible the desired change. In the systems of tantra and the yoga of the Nath Siddhas, imagination is, I suggest, operational as a force that builds the subtle body *(suksm sanr)* and establishes connections with the *cakras* and other occult energies that exist not on the physical plane but on the level of *mundus imaginalis.* Needless to say, the yogic terminology does not, in this context, employ the word imagination. Instead, the process is designated as meditation, *dhydn,*[71] as practice, *sddhan,* as cultivation, *bhdvand,* and some other appropriate terms. Closest to imagination in its phrasing is the concept of the 'mental worship,' or the *mdnasapujd.* Goudriaan writes, "[The] 'mind' is considered here an important source of power able to effect the same results, or even more, as an external ritual. It is scarcely necessary to repeat that Tantric and other texts often attach great value to the execution of 'mental worship' *(manasapuja)* which is sometimes said to far to exceed in effectivity the external worship with lamps, flowers, grains and other articles."[77] I will treat this matter to a greater length in following chapters; at this point, let it suffice to establish as a working hypothesis the following assertion: the role that

[67] **Couliano,** *Eros and Magic,* **4-5.**

[68] **The** *phantasms* **are images, which the inner sense, or** *phantasia,* **presents to the soul. In this sense, this is just an alternative expression for** *imagination.* **The important thing to remember is that both terms, fantasy and imagination, are in this context meant to be understood as image making faculties and intermediaries between material and spiritual realities. The terms do not have the connotation of the 'unreal' within this frame of reference. See ibid., 1-27 and throughout.**

[69] **On this subject see Frances A. Yates,** *The Art of Memory* **(London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).**

[70] **Ibid., 6.**

[71] **Padoux remarks on the usage of term 'visualization' in this connection that, "These are the two meanings of the word** *dhydna:* **both meditation - notably of a deity - and a clear-cut mental picture created by meditation of the deity's form, according to its scriptural description (in** *dhyana-sloka)."* **Padoux,** *Vac:* **47, n.37.**

[72] **Ibid., 248.**

manasapuja plays in tantra corresponds to the role that *imagination* plays in magic, as the latter is understood in the West.

3. The third major fact that defines magic is that its nature is comparable to eros - "Eros itself being a form of magic"[73] - in the sense that both magical and erotic activities are aimed at union.[74] Starting from the belief in the universal correspondence, i.e. sympathy and connection between things, it was but a short step to another important conclusion: what binds the world together is the attraction, the love, the *eros.* Neoplatonic speculations on the power of *eros* were correlated with magic in the Renaissance period by Marsilio Ficino and especially by Giordano Bruno. His ideas, as Couliano reminds us, "carry to an extreme end Ficinian theory of love as a form of natural magic."[75]

Yoga may also be conceived as a science of unions, and the complementary pairs that need to be united are very often, especially in tantra, given sexual signifiers. Gopinath Kaviraj has observed that "when Siva and Sakti are united this phantasm [of phenomenal world where Siva and Sakti appear as divided] vanishes into nothing. We shall see that the aim of Yoga is the establishment of this Union. This will also explain the existence of so much erotic imagery in connection with an account of this mater in the

Couliano, *Eros and Magic,* 221. "[Marsilio] Ficino is father of the equation Eros = magic, whose terms can doubtless be reversed." Ibid., 87. On Bruno, see also Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991 [1st ed. London, 1964]) and Karen Silvia de Leon-Jones, *Giordano Bruno and the Kabbalah: Prophets, Magicians and Rabbis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

[74] Cornelius Agrippa, perhaps the most influential Renaissance writer on the subject of magic, defines it at the beginning of his *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres,* in the following manner: "Magic ... produceth its wonderful effects , *by uniting* the virtues of things through the *application of them one to the other ... joining and knitting them together* ..." Qtd. in Christopher I. Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels: Cornelius Agrippa's Occult Philosophy* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 44; emphases added. And in a similar vein, in his *De Incertitudine et Vanitate Scientiarum atque Artium,* Agrippa asserts that "Natural magic ... [works by] *coupling* the inferior things with the qualities of the superior, as it were by certain *enticements,* to cause a natural *joining of them together..."* Qtd. in ibid. 64; emphases added.

[75] Culianu, in *Hidden Truths,* 114.

Tantric and Nathic literature, both Hindu and Buddhistic, in the mediaeval ages." In this sense, it is evident that both magic and yoga are related to the power of eros, provided that the latter is understood as a drive toward union.

I would accordingly define magic as an occult science oriented toward power (understood as a manifestation of the sacred), made operational through the power of imagination, in its nature erotic (driven by a desire toward union). In all three elements, magic is comparable and analogous to the discipline of tantra and *hatha* yoga, as has already been indicated and as I will continue to suggest and demonstrate throughout this work.

ALCHEMY

Alchemy is another occult discipline that requires theoretical clarification if the Nam Siddhas are to be properly understood. As already mentioned, scholars such as Dasgupta, Eliade, and White have emphasized the fact that náthist *sádhana* represents a translation of alchemical procedures into yogic practice. However, alchemy is a discipline of such bewildering complexity and its rhetoric idiosyncrasies are so opaque that they ask for, and deserve, a much more comprehensive and detailed study then the scope of this work admits. I will therefore have to be extremely selective and will limit myself to presentation of the bare essentials.

At the outset, it needs to be understood that alchemy should not be treated as the 'precursor of chemistry.' "The alchemists were not interested - or only subsidiarily - in the scientific study of nature. ... As we shall see presently, the alchemist's quest was not

Kaviraj, "History and Doctrine of the Nâthas," 73.

scientific but spiritual. ... In brief, all alchemists have proclaimed their art to be an esoteric technique pursuing a goal similar or comparable to that of the major esoteric and 'mystical' traditions "[77] In India, the alchemy is most closely correlated with tantric and yogic traditions, as already mentioned on several occasions. Being an occult discipline, alchemy is also closely related with issues of initiations and secrecy.[78]

The most important alchemical concept is, arguably, the notion of transmutation. In a hierarchically imagined universe, gold, divinity, and immortality are assigned the uppermost position, and they are seen as mutually correspondent. "In ancient India, a text from the eighth century BCE (*Satapatha Brahmana* 3.8.2.27) proclaims that 'gold is immortality'."[79] Alchemy rests on the claim that it is possible to transform the lower rings of the 'great chain of being' into their superior correlates, a process that is habitually referred to as the 'transmutation of the base metals into gold.' (The original substance that is the subject of projected transformation is, in Western alchemy, usually designated by the term *materia prima.)* If this principle is projected onto human body, the expected result may be conceptualized in the following manner: "Just as gold neither corrodes nor loses its brilliance with time, so too the human body may realize a perfect and immutable state."[80] The goal of alchemical practice is not necessarily imagined as gold; often, it is conceived of in the form of the elixir or nectar (of immortality, or longevity).

As already stated, the idiosyncrasy of the Nath Siddhas lies in their insistence that the basis of transmutations, the *'materia prima,'* is to be found in the semen, the *bindu* or *bifa.* Originating from the uppermost *cakra* in the head (esoterically correlated to Siva's

[77] **Mircea Eliade, "What is Alchemy?" in** *Hidden Truths,* **243.**
[78] **Ibid.**
[79] **Ibid., 245.**
[80] **David Gordon White, "Indian Alchemy," in** *Hidden Truths,* **261.**

dwelling place), its waste is tantamount to bodily deterioration, disease and death. By the same token, its preservation and eventual return to the top *cakra* is equivalent to the attainment of both adepthood and immortality. This latter process is the major concern of *kundalinl yoga,* summarized by White as follows:

> In *kundalinl* yoga, the yogin, through his austerities, causes his own seed *(hi} a)* to mount the six *cakras* through the agency of the internal (female) *kundalinl* serpent. As the *kundalinl* pierces each of the *cakras,* the heat thus generated transmutes the seed until it becomes pure ambrosia *(amrtd)* in the highest *cakra,* the *sahasrara,* located in the skull. ... The *kundalinl* then unites with the (male) 'full moon' of the *sahasrara,* such that the *amrta* built up there rushes down through the body, rejuvenating it and rendering it immortal.[82]

The reader will notice that alchemy shares the general principle of esotericism, that is to say the belief in correspondences (between metals and bodily fluids and spiritual states), while its own particularity consist in the claim that it is possible to transmute the selected element(s) of nature at the disposal of the alchemist. This comprises the minimum amount of information needed to appreciate yogic application of alchemical principles. Before leaving the subject of alchemy, however, one more crucial element needs further elucidation. In order to express their ideas, alchemists have elaborated a highly complex mode of discourse, their secret or 'code' language. The opacity of their rhetoric is to a large degree involved with the issue of initiatic secrecy; on the other hand, it reflects in its own appropriate form the nature of metaphysical realities that it attempts to portray. "The stages of the alchemical opus constitute an initiation, a series of specific experiences aimed at the radical transformation of the human condition. But the

[81] **See, for example, Allison Coudert, "Elixirs," in ibid., 248-52.**
[82] **White, "Indian Alchemy," 263.**

successful initiate cannot adequately express his new mode of being in a profane language. He is compelled to use a 'secret language.'" It is quite conceivable that a similar situation is at the root of the fact that the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh,* especially the *pad* section, abounds in 'upside-down' or 'twilight' language. I intend to treat the matter more fully in the chapter on the esoteric uses of language.

THE NATH SIDDHAS AND THE FAIVRIAN MODEL OF ESOTERICISM

In conclusion, I would like to propose a formal correlation between the theory and practice of the Nath Siddhas and Antoine Faivre's model of esotericism, based on four essential and two provisional elements. It will be remembered that correspondences, living nature, imaginations and mediations, and experience of transmutation belong to the first set of requirements, while the second consists of the practice of concordance and transmission. It will also be remembered that Arthur Versluis suggested that the element of gnosis should be added to this list. How do these seven elements, then, connect to the theory and practice of the Nath Siddhas? I have to emphasize one more time that my proposal addresses the issue of formal correspondence and analogy between Western and Indian esotericism and should not be misconstrued as an argument that claims the actual identity between the two.

1. *Correspondences* are implicit practically everywhere, since one of the principal assumptions asserts that the gross, material forms are analogous to their more subtle correlatives. As Gorakh states, "Outside and inside are one." The most important

[83] **Eliade, "Alchemy," 244.**

[84] *Gorakh Bam, Pane Matra,* **4. "bahar bhltar yekarikar." This is almost literally identical to one of the foundational precepts of Western esotericism, the statement from the** *Emerald Tablet (Tabula Smaragdind),* **'As above, so below.'**

chain of analogies, in addition to the fundamental notion of the similarity between *microcosm* and *macrocosm,* is the following: Siva = mercury = semen *(bindu)* = elixir *(amrt).* When Gorakh advises that "The lower Ganges should be brought up to the [top of the] Egg of Brahma,"[85] or when he claims that "At the summit of the sky, a child is speaking,"[86] he is not being simply metaphorical. He is expressing himself in the idiom that implies a belief in the correspondence between the 'lower Ganges' *(kundalini)* and its heavenly correlate, between the top of the subtle body *(sahasrdr cakrd)* and the top or the summit of the universe *(brahmand).* The basic assumption that performance of bodily feats, so characteristic of *hatha* yoga, will have spiritual outcomes is equally based on the notion of correspondence.

2. *Living Nature* again quite literally refers to the semen as a natural substance that serves as the basis of immortal life. "Where the *bindu* dwells, there is life,"[87] claims Gorakh. In a deeper sense, the Nath Siddhas share the general tantric assumption "that the universe we experience is nothing other than the *concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead* that creates and maintains the universe".[88] This energy is most often conceptualized as *sakti,* which is also esoterically present within the body in the form of *kundalini sakti.* The latter, often glossed as the 'serpent power' is a principal source of occult power and its 'awakening' is a major goal of yoga. We should also notice the tendency to correlate the divine pair of Siva and Sakti with natural, i.e. bodily substances. When Gorakh says that "Sakti is in the form of blood, / Siva is in the form of

[85] **GBS 2. "patal kl gaiiga brahmand carhaiba."**
[86] **GBS 1. "gagan sikhar mahim balak bolai."**
[87] **GBS 57. "bind basai taharn jyandam."**
[88] **White, "Mapping a Tradition," in** *Tantra in Practice,* **9; emphasis added. Similarly, "Furthermore ... Saivism understands all of the material world to be (an emanation of) the body of the goddess." White, "Why Gurus are Heavy?"** *Numen* **31,1 (1984), 45.**

semen," he is in effect asserting that natural components which generate the human body are in their essence divine, that is to say alive. This is an implicit allusion that for the Naths, as for the esotericists in general, nature (paradigmatically symbolized by female menstrual blood and male semen) is in fact alive.

3. *Imaginations and Mediations* are at the heart of the yogic imagining of the subtle body *{suksm sarir)* and the network of channels *{nari,* Skt. *nadi)* and lotuses or circles of powers *(padma, cakra).*[90] The subtle body and its energies are not a given: one has to 'build' this body through a regime of elaborate practices that often imply the exercise of visualization and mental concentration. Without the engagement of the powers of imagination, work with the *cakras* and other elements of the subtle body would be impossible. In that sense, imagination is analogous to yogic meditation *(dhydn).*

4. *Experience of Transmutation* pertain to both the transmutation of the gross elements into subtle ones and the transmutation of semen into elixir, as well as the transmutation of a yogi from an 'unripe' or 'uncooked' *(apakva)* into a 'ripe' or 'cooked' *(pakva).*[91] According to Dasgupta, "The Sadhana of the Nath Siddhas is essentially a Sadhana of *transubstantiation* and *transfiguration."* The culmination of this process is the transformation of the mortal human being into an immortal adept or even a god.

5. *The Practice of Concordance,* that is to say, "the will not only to eliminate some differences or to uncover harmonies among diverse religious traditions, but to acquire above all a *gnosis* embracing diverse traditions and melding them in a single

GBP 12: 5. "sakti ruplraj achai siv rupTbyand."
[90] **1 will elaborate on this subject in the next chapter.**
[91] **See, for example, Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **220.**
[92] **Ibid., 251; italics in the original.**

crucible" explains, to a significant degree, the ease with which Siddhas commingled with the Islamic mystics, the Sufis. David Gordon White claims that "perhaps no Hindu religious sect has interacted on as profound and sustained a level as have the Nath Siddhas with exponents of that mystic branch of Islam known as Sufism".[94] In a similar vein, Charlotte Vaudeville asserts that "[i]t is precisely among Jogis that the Sufis claim to have made their first converts. ... The Jogis ... too claim to have won over some distinguished Sufis to their own creed: even the prophet Muhammad became, according to them, a disciple of Gorakhnath."[95] A fine example of the practice of concordance, in addition to several verses that employ Islamic vocabulary,[96] is the closing line of the text *Pandrah Tithi,* which states: "To countless *siddhas,* Sri Gorakh is the *pirr*[97] (The 'plr' is a Muslim saint or a spiritual guide.) Even more specific is the *sabad* that proclaims, "We are Hindus by birth; yogis by burning;[98] Muslims by wisdom."[99]

6. *Transmission* of knowledge and the methods of practice through a set of initiations is naturally met in the lifestyle of *jogis.* The Nath Siddhas are an initiatic order, and only after this requirement has been met is a disciple given *mantra* and other instructions of how to conduct the practice of yoga. The very knowledge of yoga was also obtained through the process of transmission, from the god Siva to the first founders of the Order.

7. *Gnosis,* a mystical knowledge acquired through first-hand experience *(paricay)* which surpasses all the bookish and intellectual learning and which sets the Siddhas apart

[93] **Faivre,** *Access to Western Esotericism,* **14.**
[94] **White, "Wonders of Sri Mastnath," 402.**
[95] **Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **84.**
[96] **GBS 9, 10, 11, 118, 182, 225; GBP 27.**
[97] *Gorakh Bam, Pandrah Tithi,* **17. "anant siddham srl gorakh plr."**
[98] **That is to say, by practice.**
[99] **GBS 14. "utpati hindu jaranam jogl akali pari [plri] musalmamnlrn."**

and above those who lack such an experience is one of the key elements of their identity as it is a prominent *leitmotif* In *The Sayings of Gorakh.*[100] "There is no experience above self-discovery,"[101] proclaims Gorakhnath. "Those who know intimately their self *(atman)* do not die."[102]

In this chapter, I made an attempt to demonstrate that esotericism is both meaningful on its own terms as it is applicable as a conceptual model for understanding cross-cultural manifestations of formally similar ideas and practices. My overall intention was to argue a feasibility of the notion of what may be termed a 'comparative esotericism.' In order to pursue that argument, I was engaged in speculations of a more general nature. In what follows, I will be more specific as far as my 'subject' is concerned. In other words, I intend to focus more fully on the Nath Siddhas and *The Sayings of Gorakh;* however, I will continue to treat them in the light of esoteric concepts, which are at this point hopefully more familiar in their meaning and more justifiable in their application.

In order to provide a unifying theme to my exposition, I suggest structuring it around the concept of the *bindu.* This is the most important element, the central focus of yogic *sddhana. "Bindu* is verily yoga," states Gorakhnath. "The one who knows the mystery of this *bindu,* / He is creator, he is god."[103] When released through the sexual act, according to the *jogis* the *bindu* is wasted, which ultimately leads to disease, old age, and death. To counteract this process, celibacy is an essential requirement, but it alone is not sufficient. The *bindu* has to return back to its place of origin, which is at the level of the head and the uppermost *cakra,* esoterically glossed as 'the summit of the sky,' *gagan*

[100] **See also a relevant discussion on the value of experience in ibid., 9.**

[101] *Gorakh Bam, Sisp Puran.* **"apa pakhai parca nahTm."**

sikhar. This process of the return of the *bindu,* its transmutation from material semen into spiritual elixir, constitutes the most important practice of the Nath Siddhas, the praxis of reversal, *ulta sádhana.* For that reason, I suggest that we follow the transformations of the *bindu* in the same, reversed order. Starting at the material level we will engage in issues of body and sexuality. At the intermediate level, our concern will be with the phenomenon of speech and rhetoric. We will finish with a discussion of the yogic approach to mind and ideology. The next three chapters will then be structured around the Náthist understanding of the concepts of body, speech, and mind, viewed through the model of esotericism.

Gorakh Bam, Pandrah Tithi, **1. "atam parcai marai na koi."**
GBS 148. "byand him jog. ... / ya bind ka koi jamnaim bhev / so apaim karta ápaim dev."
See GBS 1.

CHAPTER 2

ESOTERICISM AND POWER OF THE NATH SIDDHAS

RELATED TO BODY AND SEXUALITY

In the fortress of the body are the gods, the temples, and Benares.
There I have naturally met the Indestructible.

Gorakh Bânï(G&? **23: 2.)**

For one drop of semen, men and women exhaust themselves to death.
But the yogi who controls it thereby achieves success.

Gorakh Bání **(GBP 44: 2.)**

At the ordinary level, *bindu* manifests as a material substance, the sexual secretion. Within the human body, its location is within the *mûlâdhâr cakra* at the base of the spine. Yogis attempt to raise the *bindu* along the subtle conduit known as the *suçumnà naň,* the final destination being the *sahasrâr cakra* in the head. This process is alternatively expressed as the 'waking up' of *kundaliril šakti.* Since at the beginning of this process the *bindu* has corporeal and sexual aspect, I suggest that the theme of this chapter be the yogic understanding of body and sex.

How do the Nâth Siddhas approach the human body? What are the esoteric components of that approach? In what manner do they understand human sexuality? How is the issue of power relevant for these considerations? These are the main question I will be asking and attempting to answer in this section. As I have already stated, to separate these issues into discrete thematic units is but a strategic and analytic move: in reality,

'out there,' relationships between power, sexuality, corporal and discursive practices, social position, and esotericism are in fact an interconnected whole. Similarly, I have decided to treat the body and sexuality separately for strategic reasons and not because I propose an actual dichotomy. In my exposition, I will continue to look at the phenomenon of the Nam yogis through the conceptual model of esotericism. In doing so, I have a twofold purpose in mind. On the one hand, my intention will be to demonstrate the applicability of the model onto its chosen 'subject.' The model fits. More importantly, I want to stress the benefits resulting from this methodological approach. In other words, my concern will be to answer the question: what do we gain by applying the model of esotericism onto the *jogisl* I suggest the following as the most important insights:

Yogic work with the subtle body is based on the disciplined use of imagination and this body is itself imaginal. The reader is already familiar with the fact that Faivre considers imagination to be one of the four necessary elements of esotericism. In my understanding, imagination is the tool that builds the subtle body *(suksm sarir)* and its centres and conduits of energy *(cakras* and *nans)* that are of fundamental importance for the practice of yoga. Imagination is the power that - in addition to breathing exercises, bodily postures, and mantric utterances - 'wakes' up the occult centres of energy within the body and reverses the flow of semen upwards, turning it into elixir. Imagination breathes life into the *microcosm* within the body of a yogi and populates it with metaphysical powers and entities. It makes operative the correspondences between semen, breath and mind. Without the employment of the powers of imagination the practice of yoga would lack deeper results. Important part of yogic work is focused on the meditation on and manipulation of the subtle body that is 'created' through a process that

may be thought of as the disciplined imagination, and this body may be thus defined as 'imaginal.' Paying attention to the principles of esotericism, such as imagination, helps us therefore to understand more fully a vital component in the practice of yoga. It also provides us with a link between yoga and magic, which Couliano defines as "a science of the imaginary."[1]

Based on the principle of correspondence, yogic work with cakras and kundalim may be understood as a practice of devotion. This is a statement that contradicts the general image of the Naths as a group that "left nearly no place for devotionalism in their religious practice." The Indian critics of the Nath *panth,* by the way, also share this view. It appears as if the *jogis* are narcissistic in their 'obsession' with bodily exercises and powers, meditating on the *cakras* instead of praying to the gods. But, once it is remembered that the *cakras* correspond to the gods (Siva is in the *sahdsrar,* Sakti in the *mulddhdr),* it becomes obvious that to meditate on the subtle 'lotuses' within the body is tantamount to meditating on the deities that dwell within them. In this sense, concentration on the *cakras* is devotion. This fact is occluded unless the esoteric principle of correspondences is properly understood. Similarly, interest in power, so typical of the Nath yogis, may also be read as a devotional act, once we recall that in magic power represents the manifestation of the sacred. It is my contention that by taking into account the general principles of esotericism and magic we are able to better understand the practice of the Nath yogis and to reconceptualize (that is to say, approach theoretically from a different angle) the category of devotion.

[1] **Couliano,** *Eros and Magic,* **xviii.**

[2] **White, "Wonders of Sri Mastnath," 401. Charlotte Vaudeville similarly contrasts yoga with** *bhakti:* **"Contrary to Yoga, which is essentially technique, Bhakti is essentially faith, the adoration of a personal**

Starting from the postulate that eros, magic and yoga are all intentional activities that aim towards union, we may both problematize the sexuality of the Ndths and advance the thesis of the comparability between yoga and magic. By problematizing the sexuality of the Nam yogis I have in mind the fact that it is neither rejected (as in the case of *sarnnyasis)* nor is its role emphasized (as in the case of 'orthodox' *tdntrikas).* It is in fact internalized and consists in the esoteric 'coupling' of occult energies of the body that are given sexual and gender-specific signifiers. What is more, the inner experience of the ascent of *kundalini* and the piercing of the *cakras,* aside from the obvious erotic symbolism, is (at least occasionally and by some) felt as an experience of orgasm. The principle of correspondence is again at work here, for the subtle centres of energy that are often represented by non-sexual signifiers nevertheless ultimately correspond to Siva and Šakti, whose union is then attempted and, if achieved, experienced as bliss. And it is the power of imagination that turns the subtle 'lotuses'- often iconographically represented as mere geometric designs - into erotic couples. In this way, the major components of esotericism are discernable in the yogic practice of inner unions that result in the acquisition of the occult powers and altered states of being. Yoga is thus union, that is to say eros. Couliano also claims, with Ficino and Bruno, that magic and eros are one. It follows that yoga and magic are compatible, for both are based on the principle of union, which is eros.

I will now elaborate on these points. To begin with, I will look at the human body as understood by the Nath yogis through the conceptual grid of esotericism. Does the model fit? What are the advantages of observing the *jogis* through these particular lenses?

God, who is generally 'manifested' in an anthropomorphic form, that of an *avatára* **or 'descent.'" Vaudeville, "Kablr and the Interior Religion,"** *History of Religions,* **3 (1964), 194.**

Following that, I will turn to the question of sexuality and treat it similarly. So then, how do the Gorakhnathis understand the esoteric aspects of the human body?

THE ESOTERIC BODY: MICROCOSMIC AND IMAGINAL

Correspondences

That the human body as a *microcosm* represents an analogue of the *macrocosm* is an instance of the esoteric mode of thought, since the link that connects the two is based on the notion of *correspondence.* In Indian tradition, the human body has been homologized with the universe since Vedic times. The famous cosmogonic hymn (Rg Veda, X, 90) about the sacrifice of the *purusa* has the limbs of this primordial man correlated with social classes and cosmic divisions. The correspondence between the human body and the universe is, also, of crucial importance in the medical system of Áyur Veda. Indian astrology recognizes correlation between the human body and the zodiac.[3] A Hindu temple is built upon a layout that translates the form and proportions of the human body into architectural design.[4] In yogic and tantric traditions, this correspondence between the body and the cosmos is emphasized. A typical example of this view is offered in a Sanskrit text that is related to the system of *hatha yoga,* which is the form of yoga most

[3] **"The twelve sign of the Zodiac respectively represent, the head, face, breast, heart, belly, navel, abdomen, genital organ, tooth, eyes, two knees, two ankles and the two feet of Kalapurusha."** *Kalaprakasika: The Standard Book on the Election (Mahoortha) System,* **trans. N. P. Subramania Iyer (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982), xiii. Indian astrology also connects the flow of breath through either of the two nostrils to the phases of the Moon and the position of planets in the orbits. The correspondent practice called "Svarodaya implies that, among other things, those who know the movement of the Sun, the Moon and the other planets can use this knowledge to predict the nature of the movement of the breath in then-bodies, or in other bodies. Likewise the movement of the breath in the microcosm can be used to determine the position of the planets in the macrocosm." Hart Defouw and Robert Svoboda,** *Light on Life: An Introduction to the Astrology of India* **(New Delhi: Penguin, 1996 [1992]), 177.**

[4] **"Mention must also be made here of the reminiscence of Purusa, the Vastu figure who, his body exactly filling a square place, is considered to be lying face downwards in the earth as the substratum on which all temples are built." David Smith, "Aspects of the Interrelationship of Divine and Human Bodies in**

closely associated with the Nath Siddhas. This is what the text, the *Siva Samhita,* states on the subject:

> In this body, the mount *Meru* ... is surrounded by seven islands; there are rivers, seas, mountains, fields; and lords of the fields too.
>
> There are in it seers and sages; all the stars and planets as well. There are sacred pilgrimages, shrines. And presiding deities of the shrines.
>
> The sun and moon, agents of creation and destruction, also move in it. Ether, air, fire, water and earth are also there.
>
> All the beings that exist in the three worlds are also to be found in the body; surrounding the *Meru* they are engaged in their respective functions.
>
> ... He who knows this is a Yogi; there is no doubt about it.[5]

It should be evident that the notion of the body as the replica of the *macrocosm* is in its nature esoteric, being based on the principle of correspondence. The fact that this idea is widely attested to cross-culturally and in several historical epochs does not contradict its inclusion within the field of esotericism. Nevertheless, in a certain sense, this is not a 'secret;' in a sense, *'microcosm* equals *macrocosm'* is not in and by itself an exclusively esoteric notion.[6] The important distinction is, however, *how* does one know this; what *manner* of knowing are we assuming here? In other words, the quality of knowledge is the issue, not necessarily its content. In this important sense, esoteric knowledge is a special - and thus elite, and therefore powerful - kind of knowledge. "He who knows this

Hinduism," *Religion,* **19 (1989), 212. Smith is referencing a classic study by Stella Kramrisch,** *The Hindu Temple* **(Calcutta, 1946).**

[5] **The** *Siva Samhita,* **trans. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu (Allahabad: Panini Office, 1914), 16. This passage is also quoted in** *Goraksa-Vacana-Sangraha,* **verses 43-7.**

[6] **Similar ideas "are found present also in many a philosophical and religious current... This principle is equally at work in the procedures of divination, poetry and sorcery, but the latter, nonetheless, are not synonymous." Faivre,** *Access to Western Esotericism,* **11.**

[7] **Cf. this with the following view: "Specifically, the sacred is not to be conceived independent of experience, rather sensory perception is the locus in which the sacred is originally perceived, but the sacred is constituted by the mode f perception rather than the contents of perception." Bryan S. Rennie,** *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1996), 217.**

is a Yogi; there is no doubt about it."[8] For the yogi knows the details of this correspondence (and these details may be then qualified as esoteric knowledge proper); what is more to the point, he or she knows how to put this knowledge into practice, and thereby, knowing and acting *thus,* he or she may attain the power to accomplish specific goals. In other words, I am arguing that a certain notion, such as analogy between the body and the universe, may be held generally or by a broad segment of population, to the point that there is 'nothing esoteric' (secret or exclusive) about it. Where this is the case, the 'real' esotericism consists either in the details (often transmitted ritually)[9] or in the practical application of this knowledge. In this sense, I feel justified in designating this idea esoteric.

On a deeper level, a certain notion or a mode of practice should or could be more precisely labeled as esoteric (or occult) on the basis of the *attitude* involved in its conception or execution. Discussing the notion of secrecy, Faivre maintains that "if we take the sacred seriously, we must always put up a slight partition, simply theoretical really, between the sacred and the profane, precisely in order not to profane what is held dear [that is, the secret], what has been obtained with difficulty in undergoing diverse trials."[10] In other words, esotericism is intimately related with - it is impossible without - the notion of the sacred. Many may approach the man-equals-universe analogy exoterically[11] - in a scientific spirit, for example - but the 'real' esotericist approaches it

[8] *Siva Samhita,* **16.**
[9] **Faivre argues that "generally it is not a doctrine that an initiate is supposed to keep hidden, but at most the details of the ritual."** *Access to Western Esotericism,* **32.**
[10] **Ibid., 32-3.**
[11] **"We must remember that there exists an esotericism of exotericism and an exotericism of esotericism, as if each of them were understood only as a function of the other or represented the other side of the same medal." Ibid., 33.**

as a dimension of the sacred. Esotericism is not only what is secret , but even more importantly, what is held *sacred.* I cannot overstate the importance of this distinction.

To return to the notion of the human body as a *microcosm:* The Nam Siddhas ascribe a paramount importance to this idea; it is a central assumption of their practice, which is the corporeal practice, or 'the culture of the body,' *kdyd sddhana.* They insist, in fact, that to know and master the human body - especially in its esoteric aspects - amounts to the mastery of yoga, which leads to liberation and immortality. It leads to the attainment of the *siddhis,* which is to say, to the acquisition of power. The esoteric aspect of the human body is, on the closer analysis, twofold. It consists of the greater world, the cosmos, which is esoterically present within an individual body; and it consists of esoteric aspects of the individual body, that are otherwise unknown to ordinary people, or inaccessible to ordinary sensory perception. The esoteric individual body, in a sense, mirrors the secret and invisible aspects of the natural body, while at the same time it mirrors the totality of the universe. As Gorakhnath says, "Within the one there is the infinite, and within the infinite there is the one. / By the one the infinite is produced. / When the one is experienced within, / The infinite is contained within the one." What is more, the cosmos is present within the body in both physical and metaphysical aspects.[14] An elaborate example of this notion is found in a portion of an important Sanskrit text of the Nath yogis, the *Siddhasiddhantapaddhati* (3. 1-14):

[12] **"Esotericism is not simply a** *disciplina arcani,* **a discipline of the arcane." Faivre, "Esotericism," in** *Hidden Truths,* **42.**

[13] **GBP 14: 1. "ek maim anant anant maim ekai, ekai anant upaya / antari ek saum parca huva, tab anant ek maim samaya."**

[14] **See, for example, Banerjea,** *Philosophy of Gorakhnath,* **195-205.**

Let us examine now the science of the body. He who experiences within one's body everything that is movable and immovable [that is to say, everything that exists] becomes a yogin gifted with the knowledge of the body. [1]

The tortoise is situated in the soles of the feet [and the seven lower worlds *(tald)* are placed above it]: Patala in the big toes, Talatala above the big toes, Mahatala in the heels, Rasatala in the ankles, Sutala in the calves, Vitala in the knees and Atala in the thighs. These seven lower worlds are under the dominion of Rudra, the lord of the gods. Within the body, he [Rudra] is Bhava, the incarnation of anger, or indeed Rudra, the Destroyer of the Fire of Time *[kaJagnirudra]. [2]*

The earth is [situated] in the anus, the atmosphere in the genital region, the sky in the region of the navel. Thus, the god Indra resides in the triple world inside the body. He who controls all the senses *(indriyd),* he alone is Indra. [3]

Maharloka, the 'Great World' is at the base of the spine, Janaloka, the 'World of Generation' in the spinal cavity, Tapaloka, the 'World of Austerities' in the marrow of the spine [and] Satyaloka, the 'World of Truth' is in the flower of the lotus of the *root-[cakra\.* Thus, the primordial god, Brahma, resides in the fourfold world inside the body as the personification of the pride and self-confidence. [4][15]

In *The Sayings of Gorakh,* the esoteric correlation between the individual and cosmic body represents an underlying theoretical assumption as much as it provides a background for yogic practice. "[The one who] investigates the body and finds the indestructible [God] / Attains the unreachable immortal rank,"[16] claims Gorakhnath. The presence of macrocosmic and spiritual realities within the human body is also made explicit in the following verses, which employ a recurring stylistic device, the metaphor of the body as a fortress to be conquered:

In the fortress of the body
There are 900,000 canals.

[15] **The** *Siddhasiddhântapaddhati* **3. 1-4.1 have translated David Gordon White's French translation of the original Sanskrit, which appeared in his essay "Le monde dans le corps du Siddha: Microcosmologie dans les traditions médiévales indiennes," in** *Images du corps dans le monde hindou,* **eds.Véronique Boullier and Gilles Tarabout, (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 193-5.**

[16] **GBS 252. "khojai tan milai avinâsî agah amar pad pây."**

At the tenth door[17]
The avadhut has undone the lock.

In the fortress of the body
There are gods, temples, and KasT.[18]
There I naturally met
The Indestructible.

Says Gorakhnath,
Listen O people:
Only a few can conquer
The fortress of the body.[19]

One of the most interesting aspects of the esoteric thought related to the world-view of the Nath Siddhas lies in the occasional symbolic understanding of the founding adepts of the school and their internal projection onto the subtle body of a yogi. Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath, aside from their historical identities, sometimes also stand as symbols for spiritual achievements and ranks within the Nath hierarchy.[90] Accordingly, a yogi may *become* a Gorakh if he reaches adequate spiritual level and attains appropriate powers. For example, a *sabad* consisting of a set of yogic riddles, ends with the statement, "Whoever can answer what has been asked, he is Gorakh."[91] Similarly, another *sabad* declares, "Whosoever is beyond desires and plays without tricks, / Call

[17] **The tenth door, as Barthwal glosses, refers to the 'opening' at the top of the skull, called** *brahmarandhra.* **John Grimes defines it as a "[s]ubtle aperture in the crown of the head. Said to be the gateway to the Absolute (Brahman) in the thousand-petaled lotus in the crown of the head** *(sahasrdrd).* **Liberated beings are said to exit the physical body though this aperture." John Grimes,** *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy: Sanskrit Terms Defined in English* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1996), s.v. "Brahma-randhra."**

[18] **KasT, meaning 'shiny,' is Benares, the holiest city of India.**

[19] **GBP 23: 1-3. "kaya garh bhlmtari nav lakh khaT / dasvaim dvari avadhu tall laT /// kaya garh bhfmtari dev dehura kasT / sahaj subhai mile abinasT** *111* **badant gorakhnath sunao nar lot / kaya garh jltaiga birla koT." See also GBP39.**

[20] **"In the Nath literature the word** *Natha* **(which originally means 'the lord') has sometimes been used with an ontological significance and there is sometimes a tendency to interpret the names of the Naths, particularly of Matsyendra and Goraksa, as some transcendental states of mind or soul attainable through the practice of yoga." Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **382-3. See also Debabrata Sensharma, ed.,** *Matsyendra Saiphita: Ascribed to Matsyendranatha,* **Pt. 1 (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1994), 34: "hence Macchanda, Matsyendra were not personal name but an appellative of some** *siddhas* **who reached a particular stage in the mystic realisations."**

him a Gorakh." At another level, Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath are also esoterically present within the subtle bodies of their disciples and they may be accessed, as mediators of gnostic insights, through the practice of yoga. The very first *sabad* in the *Sayings of Gorakh* makes reference to this teacher as an eternal child engaged in the spiritual discourse at the level of topmost *cakra:* "At the summit of the sky, a child is speaking. / What kind of a name could it be given?"[23] Similar in their purport are the following two *sab ads:*

> Gorakh ploughs the field in everybody's heart.
> Those born out of it belong to us.
> To everybody's heart Gorakh tells the sermon:
> An unbaked pot does not hold water.
>
> In everybody's heart Gorakh moves silently:
> In some, he is awake; in some, he sleeps.
> In everybody's heart is Gorakh, in everybody's heart is Mlna.[24]
> The knowledge of the self *[atman]* is experienced in *guru's* mouth.[25]

In this way, the process of internalization seems to be taken to its final logical conclusion, establishing the esoteric identity between Siva and Matsyendra or Gorakh and an individual yogi, in whose subtle body all of these are present, in addition to Sakti (in the form of *kundalini).* The working of esoteric thought actualizes several instances of mirroring, where the individual identities are fluid. Gorakh is then, in a certain sense, a

[21] **GBS 86. "puchaim kahai to gorakh soi."**

[22] **GBS 195. "nisprehT nirdavai khelai gorakh kahTyai soi."**

[23] **GBS 1. "gagan-sikhar mahim balak bolai taka namv dharhuge kaisa." See also White,** *Alchemical Body,* **202 where these verses are related to the birth of a 'child of yoga,'** *yogimbhu,* **which interpretation enriches, without contradicting it, my understanding of the text.**

[24] **Mlna is Matsyendra.**

[25] **GBS 37-8. "ghati ghati gorakh bahl kyan / jo nipajai so hoi haman / ghati ghati gorakh kahai kahamnim / kacai bhandai rahe na panim // ghati ghati gorakh phirai niruta / ko ghat j age ko ghat suta / ghati ghati gorakh ghati ghati mlmna / apa parcai gur mukhi cTmnha." According to Dr. Shukdev Singh, the expression 'guru's mouth' is a code term denoting initiation. Oral communication, Benares, India, November 2002.**

human disciple of Matsyendra who lived somewhere in the early medieval period in North India. At another level, he is an immortal Siddha, living either in the Himalayas or in the *mundus imaginalis:* the exact nature of the location depends on the mode of discourse and exegetical intentions. At yet another level, Gorakh is Siva, the identity based either on the fact of human perfectibility or on the divine descent. And finally, Gorakhnath is present in one of the *cakras* of the subtle body. All these various levels of identification are made possible on the basis of the system of correspondences that relates them to each other. And, last but not least, yogic work with the *cakras* and other elements of the subtle body, due to the esoteric presence of gods and teachers, may be understood as the *yogic* way of devotion, driven by the desire towards union with these divine figures as objects of reverence. If the practice of yoga is understood in these terms, the usual statements about the lack of devotion in the case of jogls appear problematic and not entirely correct.

In a more narrow sense, in a sense more specific to the concerns and techniques of yoga, the esoteric aspect of the human body consists of the concentrated energy represented by *kundalirii sakti,* 'asleep' at the base of the spine; it consists of the 'lotus' centres of latent energy, the *cakras,* and of the channels, the *nans,* through which the energy flows; and it consists of the nectar, the *amrt,* that oozes from the 'Moon' at the top of the head, at which place Siva Himself is also metaphysically present. A yogi typically attempts to 'wake up' *kundalirii,* to have her rise along *susumnd,* the most important channel situated in the hollow of the spinal column, during which process the *cakras* also 'open' and confer gnoseological insights and occult powers onto the yogi. This subject matter is given sufficient treatment in the works of other scholars and I

consequently do not intend to dwell on the elaboration of general principles involved in this practice. What I propose, instead, is to look for the reflection of these concepts in *The Sayings of Gorakh,* and to advance the thesis that yogic work with the subtle body, as described above, may be compared to the workings of the imagination, as this concept is understood in its technical meaning in the studies of Western Esotericism.

An important characteristic of esoteric thought consists in its flexibility. Since the various aspects of the phenomenal universe are interconnected, they are also in a certain sense interchangeable. In this way, the identities are not rigid. For example, Siva and Sakti, aside from their macrocosmic ontological aspects, are also 'present' in mercury and sulfur[26] (a notion of immense importance for Indian alchemy), in man's sperm and woman's menstrual blood,[27] and in the two main *cakras* in the human body. Accordingly, in order to establish union between Siva and Sakti - which is a desired goal of practice - one can engage in work with metals and other chemical elements, which would be the approach of alchemy; alternatively, this goal may be attempted by mixing sexual fluids, as is done in some tantric rituals; and finally, the union may be accomplished within an individual body, by making Siva and Sakti meet esoterically, which would be the approach of yoga.

The following is one of the most explicit references to the presence of Siva and Sakti, within their respective *cakras* in the body, as found in *The Sayings of Gorakh:*

[26] **"The most concrete point of intersection between the yogic and alchemical traditions in India lies in the identification of mercury** *(rasa, parada, suta)* **with the semen of Siva, and of sulfur** *(gandhaka),* **red arsenic** *(manahsila)* **or mica** *(abhrakd)* **with the menstrual blood** *(khapuspa, rajas, sonita, artavd)* **or sexual emission** *(vlrya)* **of the Goddess." White,** *Alchemical Body,* **188-9. "Just as mercury is the particular element which stands for the essence of Siva, so there is a particular element which signifies the essence of Sakti, which is sulfur." David Gordon White, "Why Gurus Are Heavy?" 47.**

[27] **"Sakti is in the form of blood, Siva is in the form of semen." GBP 12: 5: "sakti rupi raj achai siv rupT byand."**

Gorakhnath says, through the tenth door
I reached heaven and Śiva.[78]
From the summit of twenty-one worlds
I proclaimed self-knowledge.

Sakti is inside the twelve petals of the Sun,
And Siva's place is inside the sixteen [petals] of the Moon.
Müla[dhar] and Sahasrar are the house of *Jlva* and Siva.
Unmani[31] lies [in] steady meditation.

I searched in *ida,*[32] I filled the *píngala*[33]
And through *susumna*[34] I reached the sky.
Ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra[35]
About the location of the *niranjan*[36] *siddhi.*[37]

The above verses represent typical poetic rendering of yogic practice related to the *cakras* as recorded in *The Sayings of Gorakh.*[38] In addition, the poems on this subject recurrently

[28] **In the original, Siva's name is given as Kedar.**

[29] **The lowest *cakra.* "The wheel *(cakra)* at the base of the spine where *Kundalirii* lies coiled like a snake. From Her seat at *muladhara, Kundalirii* controls all the activities of the physiological system through its network of 72,000 nerves." Grimes, *Dictionary,* s.v. "Muladhara, 2."**

[30] **The uppermost *cakra.* "The topmost spiritual center or thousand-petaled lotus located in the crown of the head. It is the seat of Siva, the supreme *guru.* When KundalinT Sakti unites with Siva in the *sahasrdra,* the *yogi* achieves the state of Self-realization." Ibid., s.v. "Sahasrara."**

[31] ***"Unmani* or *unmana* is a transcendent state of consciousness, located at the highest level of the subtle body. It is also a term which connotes equanimity, a pure level of thought which is sometimes taken to be the homologue *of samarasa."* White, *Alchemical Body,* 506-7, n. 186.**

[32] **One of the three main channels of energy in the subtle body. "The channel *(nadi)* which originates at the base of the spine and terminates at the left nostril. It is called the moon *nadi* because of its cooling effect. " Grimes, *Dictionary,* s.v. "Ida."**

[33] **Piiigala is a "channel *(nadi)* that originates at the base of the spine and terminates at the right nostril; called the sun *nadi* because of its heating effect." Ibid., s.v. "Piiigala."**

[34] **Susumna is the "central and most important of all 72,000 nerve channels *(nadi)* located in the center of the spinal column extending from the base of the spine to the top of the head. The six vortices *(cakra)* are situated in the central channel *(susumna),* and it is through the *susumnd* channel that *Kundalirii* rises." Ibid., s.v. "Susumna."**

[35] **Machindra is an alternative spelling of the Matsyendranath's name.**

[36] **Niranjan, 'without blemish,' or 'without embellishment' is a typical Nath appellation for the supreme being.**

[37] **GBP 19: Refrain, 1, 5. "badant gorakhnath dasvTm dvarl surg naim kedar carhiya / ikbls brahmand na sikhar upari sasamved ucariya / tek / dvadas dal bhlmtari ravi sakti, sasi sodas siv thamnam / mul sahamsar jib simb ghari unmam acal dhiyamyanam /// ill sodhi dhari pyaiigulT purl, susumnT carh asmamnam / machindr prasadai jatl gorakh bolya, niranjan sidhi naim thanam *151."***

[38] **See also the *sabads* 53, 93, 94, 98, 105, 113, 133, 176, and the *pads* 19, 21, 30, as the most representative examples of the poetic verses dealing with the subject of *cakras.***

portray the necessity of directing upwards the mutually correspondent semen, breath, and mind. The analogical chain between these three is of extreme importance. Typically, a yogi would attempt to push the semen and air upward by performing *bandhas*[40] and *mudràs*[41] in addition to manipulation of breath, the *prânâyâm.* The application of mind to this process is established through its deployment in the effort of visualization and concentration. What I would like to re-emphasize is the fact that the practice rests on the principle of correlation between physical efforts and spiritual goals.[42] The reader will remember that Faivre defines this principle as "the homo-analogical principle matching like to like, and this means one of the two can act on the other. This occurs by virtue of 'correspondences' that unite all visible things and likewise unite the latter with invisible realities."[43] The following two *sabads* explore this correlation within the context of the practice that is expressed under the metaphor of 'cooking:'[44]

> O *svami,* the breath is uncooked, life-energy is uncooked,
> Uncooked is body, the *bindu* is uncooked.
> How to cook it? How to perfect it?
> If the fire is insufficient, water will not boil.

[39] **See Mircea Eliade's "Spirit, Light, and Seed," an interesting essay that deals with some aspects of this issue. In** *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions* **(Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 93-119.**

[40] **"A class of exercises in** *Hafha Yoga,* **which when practiced along with** *pranayama* **(breathing exercises) aids in uniting the** *prána* **and** *apána* **(the ingoing and outgoing breath). They also help to seal the vital breath** *{prána)* **in the body during the practice of locks** *(mudra).* **The three main locks are** *jálandhara bandha* **(in which the head is bent forward and the chin is pressed against the chest),** *uddiyána bandha* **(in which the stomach muscles are pulled inward toward the spine), and** *mula bandha* **(in which the anus is pulled inward)." Grimes,** *Dictionary,* **s.v. "Bandha, 1."**

[41] **"It is a Hatha Yoga posture and manipulation of different organs of the body as an aid in concentration. Various advanced Hatha Yoga techniques practiced to hold the** *prána* **within the body, forcing the** *Kundalim* **to flow into the** *susumná."* **Ibid., s.v. "Mudra, 2."**

[42] **This holds true even if the desired result of the practice is the attainment of a power,** *siddhi,* **since here power means sacred.**

[43] **Faivre,** *Access to Western Esotericism,* **34.**

[44] **The yogic body is either** *pakva* **(ripe, but literally 'cooked') or** *apakva* **(unripe, i.e. 'uncooked'). "The unripe body is the body not disciplined by yoga, and the ripe body is the body disciplined by yoga." Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **220. See also Charles Malamoud,** *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India,* **trans. David Gordon White (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1st ed. Paris, 1989]).**

O *devi:* If the breath is cooked and life-energy is cooked,
If body is cooked and the *bindu* is cooked,
Then the fire of *brahman*[45] burns continuously.
If the fire is sufficient, water will boil.[46]

The goal of practice is often symbolically described as a merger of the Sun and the Moon; and the successful completion of it is proclaimed in jubilant language, abounding with metaphors of light: "0 *avadhüt,* breath should go through the *sahasra nârï. /* Then, the myriad sounds will ring. / The breath will drink seventy-two Moons, / When the primal light shines."[47] The practice itself is usually referred to either in terms of the reversal of semen, breath and mind, or in terms of the raising of *kundaliriï:* "The lower Ganges has to rise up to [the top of] the Egg of Brahma, / Where the pure drinks the water pure."[48] In this sense, it is possible to advance the thesis that the ascent of the *kundaliriï* is in itself esoterically correspondent to the ascent of semen, breath and mind. Similarly, to make the semen, *bindu,* immobile or fixed is an operation made possible by the effort to concentrate and fix the mind, which practice is facilitated by the appropriate rhythm of breathing and performance of bodily *bandhas* and *mudras.* In this way, the 'gross body' *(sthül sarïr)* is engaged through the practice of posture *(äsari),* aided by muscular contractions *(bandhas* and *mudrâs);* the respiratory system is engaged in the *pränäyäm;* the mind is employed in the practice of visualization of and the concentration

"In the 'desexualized' context of the Nath tradition, it is the fire of Brahman *(Brahmagni),* **rather than the KundalinT that mounts the cakras." White, "Why Gurus Are Heavy?" 71, n.59.**

[46] **GBS 156-7. "svamml kacT baT kaca jind / kacTkaya kaca bind / kyaiikari pakai kyurikari syhai / kacT agnlm nlr na khTjai // tau debT pakT baT paka jind / pakT kaya paka bind / brahma agni akhandit balai / paka agnlm nlr parjalai."**

[47] **GBS 53. "abadhu sahamsra narlpavan calaiga, koti jhamamkai nadam / bahatari canda baT sokhya kirani pragatl jab adam."**

[48] **GBS 2. "patal kT gaiiga brahmand carhaiba, taham bimal bimal jal pTya." As Barthwal glosses, the 'lower (or infernal) Ganges' refers to** *kundalini,* **while** *brahmand^* **(universe, lit. 'the Egg of Brahma') stands for** *brahmarandhra.*

on the *cakras;* and the end result lies in the awakening of the energy of the *kundalirii* and the mystical union of Siva and Sakti within the body of the yogi. The physical, physiological, and mental aspects of the practitioner engaged in the yogic practice are correlated within the chain of causes and effects made operational on the basis of their mutual correspondence. Thus, to give another example of this principle, we read in *The Sayings of Gorakh:* "The subtle wind remains continuous. / Inside the body, the *mahdras* [the elixir] is perfected. / Gorakh says, T have caught the unstable. / Joining Siva and Sakti, I have remained within my own house.'"[49] The correspondence between breath (subtle wind), elixir, and microcosmical reflection of the divine pair (Siva and Sakti) is evident.

Imagination and the Yogic Body

The understanding of the human body in terms of the analogy between *microcosm* and *macrocosm,* and in the terms of the correlation between semen, breath, and mind is evidently an instance of the thought that takes seriously the concept of correspondence, one of the central features of esotericism. The question remains, how to understand the concept of the subtle body *(suksm sarir),* consisting of the *cakras, nans,* and *kundalirii,* to name its most important components. Here, it is extremely important to understand that these do not exist *materially,* in the physical body. These are in fact occult dimensions of reality that may be accessed through meditation and similar practices, but they do not lie within the realm of 'ordinary' reality. Agehananda Bharati explains this notion clearly, with his usual bluntness:

[49] **GBS 130. "khartar pavanam rahai nirantari / maharas sTjhai kaya abhiantari / gorakh kahai amhe cancal grahiya / siv saktT le nij ghari rahiya."**

> All yoga discipline postulates in theory the existence of a secondary somatic system consisting of *mandala* [centers], *cakra* [circles], or *kendra* [lotuses], located along an *imagined* spinal column in that secondary body. It is important to realize - a thing which Occidental critics and Occidental phoney [sic] esotericists alike have misunderstood - that this yogic body is not supposed to have any ontological status in the sense the physical body has. It is a heuristic device aiding meditation, not an objective system. Benevolent psychologists under the inspiration of the late C. G. Jung have attempted to allocate the various nervous plexuses and ganglia to the centers of this yoga body. They may be right, but Tantrists take some pain to explain that this body and its organs have no *actual* existence.[50]

The subtle body with its centres of energy is, therefore, not a tangible or substantive object. It is *imagined,* created through the power of concentration, accessed in altered states of consciousness. Expressed in a technical term that has acquired a specific meaning through the work of Henry Corbin, it is *imaginal.* Its creation is related to workings of *imagination,* which is one of the four necessary components of esotericism according to Faivre's model. And, in light of Couliano's definition of magic as the 'science of the imaginary,' the practice of yoga that centers on this imaginal body and its energies may be understood or 'translated' as the practice of magic.

The Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman also recognizes the imaginal nature of the subtle body and its close relationship with the issues of power and magic. He writes, "The Hindu and Buddhist Tantras provide the most complete explanation of magical powers and the psychophysical causality underlying their manifestations. *Key to Tantric*

Agehananda Bharati, "Techniques of Control in the Esoteric Traditions of India and Tibet" in *The Realm of the Extra-Human: Ideas and Actions,* **ed. Agehananda Bharati (The Hague and Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1976), 93-4; emphases added.**

analyses of powers are notions of the subtle body and mind." These notions are powerful because they stand in causal relationship with the material and spiritual effects, the seeds of which are planted by the practice of willed and disciplined visualization and meditation, or imagination. What Thurman designates (following Indian terminology) 'subtle body and mind' is, I argue, what the Western esotericism designates as the realm of the imaginary, the *mundus imaginalis.* This is evident from the following: "It [that is to say, the final nature of reality, the cosmos] is pure energy that can be reached and controlled most effectively by the human nervous system while focused on precise and subtle *imagery.'"*

The activity of the mind (or the 'nervous system') that focuses on precise and subtle imagery is, I suggest, what in the Indian cultural sphere is usually designated as meditation *(dhyän),* and in the West as imagination *(imaginatio vera).* These two stand in the analogical relation to each other, in other words, they correspond to each other (which is not to say that they are identical). In a similar vein, the 'subtle body' *isüksm sarif)* spoken of in tantric and yogic traditions corresponds to what is in the Western esotericism usually designated by the term 'astral body.' It is my contention that this matter is insufficiently realized and that it needs a great deal of further comparative investigation in order to arrive at a clearer conceptualization.

[51] **Robert A. F. Thurman, "Magico-Religious Powers," in** *Hidden Truths,* **225; emphasis added.**
[52] **Ibid., 226; emphasis added.**

The ultimate goal of the yogic practice, according to the Naths, lies in the attainment of the immortal or diamond body. This is sometimes referred to as the 'divine body,' *divya deh.* It is important to realize, first of all, that this goal is in its ultimate nature spiritual. "Immortality is recognized to be the quintessence of the ultimate nature of the Lord [Siva]. ... It is for this reason that in common belief we find great Nam Siddhas like Matsyendra and Gorakh often identified with Siva or Maheávara. ... The real significance of the attainment of immortality is the attainment of the state of the Great Lord."[54] In this sense, the yogic aspiration to acquire an immortal body is *comparable* to an effort towards mystical union with the Divine. For to attain 'the state of the Great Lord' is tantamount to the attainment of identity with Him, and the identity is but an aspect of union. In this sense, Gorakhnath *is* Siva. Similarly, to attain the *siddhis* means to become like the Lord who is the natural possessor of powers. What from the position of their detractors appears to be a near-obsession with the body and power, from the perspective of the Náths is an aspiration towards the sacred understood as power.

Immortality is a mark of the Divine. To aspire towards it means to strive to become 'a second Siva.' Quest for immortality therefore entails a spiritual dimension: its aim is deification. The yogic practice is consequently based on the assumption of the possibility of perfectibility. In other words, the yogic practice is about the *transmutation* of a death-bound human being into immortal god, and in this sense it again fits perfectly

Some insights into Western conceptions of the 'subtle body' may be gathered from a fine discussion in D. P. Walker, "The Astral Body in Renaissance Medicine," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* **Vol.21 (1958), 119-33.**

[54] **Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **221.**

with the Faivrian model of esotericism. Prerogative of a god is free will, power, and life eternal. An accomplished adept of yoga, a *siddha,* exhibits these same qualities as his own. The attainment of the divine body, once the physical body has been 'cooked' in the fire of yoga, establishes a mark of difference between a *siddha* and the ordinary human being:

> Through the fire of yoga the body becomes supra-material and above all sorrows and sufferings. Such a yoga body *(yogo-deha)* is rare even to gods; it is a body bereft of all limitations and bondage and at the same time possessing great powers; it is limitless like the sky but purer even than the sky. The great yogin with his perfect body moves in the world according to his own will, - and as this perfect body is produced through the burning away of his physical body through the fire of yoga there is no further death for him.[56]

In the light of the above considerations, it follows that a display of power and free behaviour on the part of the yogis represents a sign of their sharing in the nature of the Divine. In the words of Gorakhnath, "Those who are immortal and pure are beyond sin and virtue./ They are beyond *sattva* and *rajas* [and *tamas]* and are empty. / They remember the *sabad* of *soham* and *hamsa.*[57] / Theirs is the highest goal and the endless *siddhis.*"[58] Immortality, transcendence of ethical concerns, purity from the *gunas,* emptiness, yogic remembrance (gnosis?), and powers are all combined together as descriptive marks of this new state of being.

Experience of transmutation is one of the four main constitutive elements of esotericism. See Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism, 13-4.*

[56] **Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **220.**

[57] **In Sanskrit,** *hamsa* **literally means both 'swan' and 'I am He;'** *so 'ham* **means 'I am He.' Both words are related to the sound internally heard during the process of breathing. The spiritual connotation of** *hamsa* **is described by Grimes as the "natural vibration of the Self, which occurs spontaneously with each incoming and outgoing breath. By becoming aware of** *hamsa,* **a seeker experiences the identity between the individual self and the supreme Self. Also repeated as** *So 'ham."* **Grimes,** *Dictionary,* **s.v. "hamsa."**

To summarize the main points related to the understanding of the human body according to the Nath Siddhas and to correlate them to the Faivre's model of esotericism: The body is fundamentally a *microcosmic* replica of the *macrocosm;* in yogic terminology, the individual body, *pind,* is analogous to cosmos, *brahmand.* Siva and Sakti are also present within the human body, having their respective places at the top of the head and at the base of the spine. The human body in its material aspect *corresponds* to the universe and spiritual realities. The notion of correspondence is extended by the analogy between semen, breath, and mind, and their spiritual correlates and it also represents the theoretical foundation of yogic practice. This practice would be impossible without the exercise of *imagination,* which projects the images of the *cakras* and the whole superstructure of the subtle body over the empirical grid of the physical body. The yogic practice is oriented toward *transmutation* of the mortal body into immortal body that is in its infinite powers identical with the body of the Great Lord Siva. And finally, the practice of the Nath yogis represents an internalization of the methods of Indian alchemy. The alchemical practice focuses on the work with mercury, replaced by the semen in the practice of yoga, whose attributes and powers are ultimately those of a *living* thing.[59] Consequently, all the four major elements of esotericism are intimately interwoven in the yogic understanding of the human body. Does the same hold true for their approach to and understanding of sexuality?

GBS 46. "amara nirmal pap na pumni / sat raj bibarjit sumni / soham hamsa sumirai sabad / tihim paramartha anant sidhi."

[59] See White, "Why Gurus Are Heavy?"

SEXUALITY: ESOTERICISM AND POWER

Celibacy as the Care of the Self

The Nath *panthi* yogis are customarily described in literature as a group of celibate ascetics, as those who have renounced sex. "As early as Panini's time (c. 500. B.C.) 'Yogi' meant a man who practices religious austerities; and these were much valued, and asceticism and the vow of celibacy and life-long study were regarded as high virtues and as being productive of the highest powers."[60] "This ascetic ideal is emphasized by wandering Jogi minstrels, singing legends in which the link between indulgence of the senses and death is constantly emphasized."[61] The poems recorded in *The Sayings of Gorakh* also abound with admonitions for sexual continence. A verse such as "People who rub skin against skin / Waste the body day by day" is a typical instance of this attitude. However, while there is no reason to doubt that celibacy constitutes an important element in the career of the yogis, it is nevertheless possible to assert that sexuality, considered in its wider scope, represents a *sine qua non* of the phenomenon of the Nath Siddhas. To a large degree, this sexuality is non-ordinary: it is internalized, modified, and hidden ('occult'), sublimated and supplemented by a network of apparently non-sexual signifiers. But it is there, ubiquitous and quintessential. I propose, consequently, to devote this section to a reading of the phenomenon of the Gorakhnathi yogis with the particular intent to extrapolate and emphasize the erotic subtext related to the theory and practice of the group. It will hopefully become manifest, in the course of

[60] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,* **260.**
[61] **Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **96-7.**
[62] **GBP 48: 3. "cammaim camm ghasamta loT, din din chijai kaya, apa parcai gur mukhi na cinhaim, phari phari baghnim khaya."**

my argument, that the sexuality among the Siddhas constitutes a crucial factor of their identity and a clue to their power.

Michel Foucault has shown in *The History of Sexuality* and other writings that, despite many outward similarities, there is an important difference in nature, orientation and meaning, between Greco-Roman and Christian sexual asceticism in Late Antiquity. The practice of (a small number, usually patrician) pagans centered around the idea of 'the care of the self (Gk. *epimeleia heautou;* Lat. *cara sui).* The principal aim of the sexual moderation and abstinence was to demonstrate that a person undergoing these practices was able to control and govern oneself and be the master of oneself (an extremely important qualification in the society of masters and slaves). "The great difference in sexual ethics for the Greeks was not between people who prefer women or boys or have sex in this way or another, but was a question of quantity and of activity and passivity. *Are you a slave of your own desires or their master? ...* You have to become completely master of yourself On the other hand, early Christian asceticism was informed by the struggle against flesh and desire, which were considered negative, even demonic, and sexuality was renounced for religious reasons (an attitude most forcibly expressed with reference to the Augustinián notion of the 'original sin'). "Consequently, between paganism and Christianity, the opposition is not between tolerance and austerity, but between a form of austerity which is linked to an esthetics of existence [as in paganism] and other forms of austerity [as in Christianity] which are linked to the necessity of renouncing the self and deciphering its truth."[64]

Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 349; emphasis added.
[64] Ibid., 366.

My understanding is that the asceticism of the Nath Siddhas resembles, in its nature and orientation, the Greco-Roman type of *askesis* and that it represents a particular technique of the care-of-the-self where the self in question in its ultimate purpose aspires towards divinity. The sexual abstinence and the retention of sperm are approached as the pathways toward positive goal, which is power, *siddhi.* A yogi resorts to the ascetic methods because he, "by conserving his semen, is believed to build up an internal store of magical power."[65] Making a reference to the practice of the semen preservation, Gorakh says: "In so doing, you are the creator, you are god."[66] We have to keep in mind the fact that the religious goal of the Siddhas was neither the impersonal *nirvana* of the Buddhists and Jains, nor the merging into the monist reality of *brahman* of the Advaitans, nor the loving union with the chosen deity of the Bhaktas. The Naths were intent on deification and immortality, their aim was becoming 'a second Siva' and a life eternal. "People involved in the practice of yoga / Are not devoured by Death," is their claim. And the crucial, unavoidable step on the road towards this goal consists in the yogis' engagement with the powers of sexuality. Of course, this is a qualified sexuality, distinct from the ordinary kind, which in the case of non-initiates generally has its consummation with the men ejaculating their semen. As is well known, the yogis attempt to reverse this process,[68] and to turn their semen upward *(urddhvaretas),* resembling again in this aspect the great god Siva whose erected *lingam* points to his head, indicating, it is assumed, the direction of the upward-moved sperm. The successful accomplishment of this seminal

[65] **Audrey Cantlie, "Aspects of Hindu Asceticism," in** *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-cultural Studies in Symbolism,* **ed. loan Lewis (London: Academic Press, 1977), 265. In her otherwise interesting essay, the author makes a claim that yogic asceticism resembles what Freud calls the death instinct or the death drive, with which assertion I don't entirely agree.**

[66] **GBS 148. "so apaim karta, apaim dev."**

[67] **GBS 220. "logjugati maim rahai samay / ta logTkum kal na khay."**

reversal signals the attainment of the divine status: "[I]t has been emphatically declared in all texts of yoga that he, who has been able to give an upward flow to the [seminal] fluid is a god, and not a man."[69]

Sexual abstinence among the Náths is functional and teleological, not moral, in its presuppositions. Sexuality, in its mundane forms, is not something that the yogis consider ethically problematic or sinful, since their pragmatic philosophy does not dwell upon these concepts. "The immortal and the pure are beyond sin and virtue,"[70] declares Gorakhnáth. The real negative effects of sexuality, as understood by the Siddhas, refer more to the health hazards; its dangers are somatic and physiological, rather than ethical: "The legs become shaky, the stomach loose / And the [hair on the] head [white] like a heron's wings."[71] At the same time, as already mentioned, the struggle against the demands of desire represents an occasion for the acquisition of power - a common theme in Indian spirituality. It is well known that humans most closely approach the condition of gods when they accumulate a store of energetic heat, *tapas,* through their ascetic and celibate exertions and it is at such occasions the gods usually send heavenly nymphs to seduce the ascetics and make them release accumulated semen and thus lose their godlike power. The important fact here is that sexual abstinence represents an avenue for the obtainment of power. This is clearly declared in the following verses from *The Sayings of Gorakh:* "The yogi who holds above what goes below, / Who burns sex, abandons desire, / Who cuts through ***mays -1*** Even Visnu washes his feet."[72]

[68] **Practically every writer, who wrote on the subject of the Siddhas mentions and dwells upon this practice, technically called the** *ulta sadhana.* **One of the best summaries is still Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **229-35.**

[69] **Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **246.**

[70] **GBS 46. "amra nirmal páp na pumni."**

[71] **GBP 43: 2. "gor bhae dagmag pet bhaya dhlla, sir bagulam pankhiyam."**

[72] **GBS 17. "aradhai jatá uradhai dharai, kámm dagadh je jog! karai / tajai alyangan kátai máyá, taká bisnu pakhálai payá."**

In the case of yogis, the victory over *eros,* the victory most emphatically associated with Gorakhnath himself[73], constitutes a proof of self-mastery and justifies the assumption of the title of the 'real' yogi. "Renouncing riches and sex, / He is the lord of yoga, without fear."[74] But this victory is not by any means an end in itself, for the main objective of the Siddhas is the transformation of the sexual substances into elixir of immortality. On the basis of the centrality of this fact we may conclude that the asceticism of the Naths is not simply an exercise in sexual continence (as with the 'orthodox' renouncers) but an attempt at *transformation* of mundane sexuality into mystical *eroticism.* In addition, the sexual interplay of the polar energies of the Sun and the Moon (understood as being internally present within the body as the two main *cakras),* sexual symbolism related to the penetration of the *cakras* by the fiery snake *kundalini,* and the erotic subtext of the dress and some other external paraphernalia of the yogis, all these elements are important additional indicators of the role of sexuality among the group.

Finally, it is virtually certain that abstinence from regular sexual activity represents only a preliminary stage in the career of (some) Nam yogis. Those who have satisfied this requirement and proved to be masters of themselves, that is to say, those who have become adepts, the Siddhas, they in fact *may* resort to the ritual, *tantric* sex. This is made explicit, for example, in the references to the practice of the so-called *vajroli mudra,* the main point of which lies in the ability of the yogi to suck back,

[73] **See, for example, the account of the Gorakh's victory over the lures of the Goddess in Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults, 317-$:* **"All the Siddhas, excepting Gorakh, fell victims to the amorous charms of the goddess and every one except Gorakh felt within a desire to enjoy her, - and the desire of the Siddhas was all approved by her."**

[74] **GBS 102. "kanak kammnTm tyagem doi, so jogesvar nirbhai hoi."**

through his penis, the sperm released during the sexual act. Keeping all these facts in mind, it is justifiable to assert that the power of the Nâth Siddhas relates intimately to, and is inseparable from, the topic of sexuality. Let us, therefore, continue with the investigation of the details of this relationship.

Yoga as a Form of Eros

Etymologically, *yoga* means "union, junction, combination". The aim of yoga is the union of opposites, *coincidentia* (or *coniunctio) oppositorum,* and this union is often represented under the imagery of sexual coupling - a common theme especially, but not exclusively, in the tantric teachings. "Indeed, the desired goal of *hathayoga* ascetic and spiritual practice could be conceived as a recognition or reintegration of the two cosmic principles formulated as Sakti and Siva (or *yoni/ linga,* sun/ moon, *nâda/ bindu,* ovum/ semen, etc.) within the disciples own body, similar to the comparative Western notion of *conuinctio* [sic; *coniunctio* is meant] *oppositorum.*"[77] A yogi is the one who is engaged in the activity of joining opposites. This effect can be achieved in various ways: regulating the breathing and joining breaths within the body, chanting mantras, meditating, and so on. The point is that by this process the disparate elements of reality are coupled, joined, united. David Gordon White provides a short summary of the possible pairs to be joined: "*Yoga,* literally 'union' is, in the mystic parlance of the Nâth Siddhas, the union of sun and moon, fire and fluid, ovum and seed, that which is

[75] **See Jeffrey J. Kripal,** *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna,* **2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1st ed. 1995]). In a nutshell, Kripal understands eroticism as an interpénétration of the categories of sexual and religious.**
[76] **Vaman Shivaram Apte,** *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary:Revised and Enlarged* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998 [1st ed.1890]), s.v. "yoga".**
[77] **Ellen Goldberg,** *The Lord Who Is Half Woman: Ardhanârisvara in Indian and Feminist Perspective* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2002), 67.**

enjoyed *(upabhogya)* and that which enjoys *(bhokta),* and ultimately, the commingling of the principles of creation and destruction..."[78] Gnoseological and soteriological aims are achieved through a process of union, through yoga.

At this point, I would like to advance one more time the idea that yoga (at least, the tantric yoga of the Siddhas), as a form of thought and a mode of practice, may be seen as an analogy of Western magic and that magic corresponds to eros, "Eros itself being a form of magic."[79] This analogical link is founded on the principle that yoga, magic, and eros all work on the basis of attractions, sympathies and unions. The justification for establishing the parallel between yoga and sexuality consequently lies in the fact that both of these are activities aiming at a particular kind of union. Even at the most fundamental level, the yogic quest shares certain erotic implications.

The followers of Gorakh are well known for elaborate esoteric mappings of the human body, which, in their view, represents an interior hierarchical universe, embracing both the infernal and celestial regions, peopled with deities and other spiritual beings, consisting of several centers of mystical energy. These centers, the *cakras,* are numbered in various ways (four, six, seven, and more) but it is unanimously accepted as fact that the two main *cakras* are at the same time the dwelling places of Siva and Sakti. The goal of yogic practice is to unite these two deities within one's body. We may argue that the purpose of yoga, as envisioned by the Siddhas, lies in achieving an internal erotic coupling of the deified principles of universal polarity. In a very real sense, the religious

[7] **White,** *Alchemical Body,* **456, n. 106.**

[79] **Ioan P. Couliano,** *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance,* **trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 221. "[Marsilio] Ficino is father of the equation Eros = magic, whose terms can doubtless be reversed." Ibid., 87.**

[80] **See, for example, White, "Le monde dans le corps du Siddha," especially pp. 193-5.**

result of yogic practice, its mystical consummation, is an orgasmic (or, at least, orgasm-like) experience.

In making the claim that yogic mystical states resemble (or represent a variety of) sexual experiences I am taking side with those scholars and interpreters of tantra (and related phenomena) who are emphasizing the possibility of mutual penetration between the categories of 'sexual' and 'religious or mystical'. In contradistinction to this attitude, "numerous scholars have attempted all sorts of mental gymnastics in a desperate effort to rescue the tradition from its stubbornly 'impure' ways. So, for example, we are asked to believe that the word *penis ilingam)* in the texts does not mean penis ..., and that scholars who privilege the sexual connotations of the word *yoni* (vagina) are being imperialistic."[81] Jeffrey Kripal has shown in his study of Ramakrishna that sexuality played a major role in the teaching of this adept, otherwise associated with the popularization of neo-Hindu *advaita.* In an important vision, for example, Ramakrishna sees himself performing cunnilingus on the *cakras* along the spine, "erotically playing with the vagina-shaped lotuses with his tongue. ... *Ever since then I have been in this state.*"[82] One day, Ramakrishna is visited by a practitioner of tantra who explains to him that "the 'stem' and 'lotuses' of *kundalinl* yoga represent Siva's phallus *(lihgam)* and the goddess 'in the form of a vagina' *(yonirupa)."* On the basis of these and similar information from a variety of sources, it is possible to speculate on the sexual content of mystical and yogic states. I will refrain, at this place, from a discussion as to whether the sexual and mystical are best viewed as the varieties of the same or as the two distinct phenomena.

[81] **Kripal, *Kali's Child, 29.***
[82] **Ibid., 127. Italics in the original.**

Yoga is an attempt at the union of opposites. Siva and Sakti represent these opposites cosmologically and theologically. "Sakti manifests the expansion, Siva manifests the contraction. / If one would make *yoga* [union] of these two, he would be a king of the perfect yogis."[84] There are two ways according to which a yogi may attempt to bring about the union of these two. As a solitary practitioner, the yogi may approach his or her own body (and mind) as a dwelling place of these two divinities and then try to unite them. "Take Siva and Sakti and make them meet,"[85] urges Gorakhnath. To raise the *kundalini* from the lowest *cakra* through application of various yogic techniques and to bring her up to the head would be an example of such an internal marriage of the opposites. Another method would be one of exteriorization: in this case a male yogi, identifying himself with Siva, would have a ritual intercourse with a woman, as Sakti, and they would establish the union in this way.

There are two points of interest here. A yogi, as a single person, is ideally, or rather virtually, a hermaphrodite. In this sense, as Ellen Goldberg has shown, the image and model of the ideal yogi is Siva as Ardhanarisvara, the god who is half woman and half man. This is a very important insight for it acknowledges the presence of an archetype that transcends the normative supremacy of masculinity. The yogic androgyny is established through the presence of the both masculine and feminine currents of energy within the body. The Sun and the Moon, Siva and Sakti, they are all found and need to be joined within the body of a yogi. "The Moon and the Sun have to be fixed facing each

[83] **Ibid., 128.**
[84] *Goraksa-Vacana-Samgrahah,* **9: "prasaram bhasayet saktih samkocam bhasayet sivah / tayoryogasya karta yah sa bhavet siddhayogirat." In Banerjea,** *Philosophy of Gorakhnath,* **333. (The translations from this Sanskrit texts are by Narayan Mishra, throughout. See Bibliohraphy, s.v. Mishra.)**
[85] **GBS 84. "siv sakti le kari jorau."**
[86] **See Goldberg,** *The Lord Who Is Half Woman.*

other," advises Gorakhnath. At the same time, a yogi may retain the original gender identity according to the demands of situation, for example, during ritual sex. In any case, whether the essential polarity is telescoped inside or projected externally, the main operative principle of yoga remains the union of opposites and in that sense it is analogically related to eroticism. Yoga, being union, is a form of eros.

Eros on the Sleeves: Sexual Symbolism of Yogis' Dress and Sectarian Marks

As far as the outward appearance of the yogis is concerned, the robe they wear is usually reddish-ochre in colour and here again we may notice an erotic subtext related to the issue. Hazariprasad Dvivedi provides in this connection the following information: "[William] Crooke has given an account of an interesting tale, according to which it was Parvati who originally gave to Gorakhnath one robe that she coloured with her own blood. It has been said that from that time the red (or ochre) colour became the colour of the yogis."[88] As Briggs comments, "Yellow (and red) is a symbol of fertility and is the marriage colour. ... The corpse is anointed with [yellow] turmeric, since death is looked upon as marriage."[89] By the same token, the colour of the yogi's dress signifies death - for yogi has 'died' for the world - and marriage. The underlying idea here is that both death and marriage are the symbols of the final state of ecstatic union or *samadhi* (let us keep in mind the fact that yogi's grave is also called *samadhi).* The erotic component is embraced by the idea of union present in both images: both Eros *and* Thanatos signify the sublime. As for the other main ornaments of the yogis that became distinctive marks of

[87] GBS 113. "Cand suraj dou sanmukhl rakhila [rakhiba]." One of the meanings of the verb *rakhna* is "to have sexual intercourse..." See R.S. McGregor, ed., *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1st ed. 1993]), s.v. "rakhna".

the sect, the earrings, the horn, and ashes smeared on the body, Matsyendra received these from Siva. Even in outward appearance, a yogi wears symbols that indicate by their origin the presence, the union, of the god and the goddess on his body. This is made the most explicit by the practice of branding the *yoni-lingam* image on the right fore arm of the yogis.

The main distinctive outward marks of the yogis, however, are the large earrings, called *mudri.* "Rings are of two general shapes, flat and cylindrical; the former called *darsan* ['vision'], the latter *kundal* ['round']. ... The ring is sometimes called *pivitri,* 'holy,' 'sacred.'"[91] As already mentioned, the custom of wearing these earrings originated with Siva and his immediate disciple Matsyendranath. An aspirant to the Order is called an *aughar,* after the initiation ceremony, during which the ears are slit and earrings inserted, he (or she[92]) becomes a Nath yogi.[93]

> In the final stage of their ceremony of initiation a specially chosen *guru,* or teacher, splits the central hollows of both ears with a two-edged knife (or razor). The slits are plugged with sticks of HJm-wood; and, after the wound are healed, large rings *(mudri)* are inserted. These are a symbol of the Yogi's faith. Some explain that in splitting the ear a *nidi* (mystic channel) in the cartilege [sic] is cut, thus assisting in the acquirement of the yogic power. The Yogi, wearing the mudra, becomes immortal.[94]

I would like to draw attention to several important elements in the above account. There is the erotic symbolism of penetration: the phallic knife opens a hole in the yogi's body.

[88] **Hazariprasad Dvivedi,** *Näth Sampradäy* **(Allahabad: Lokbharat Prakashan, 1999 [1st ed. 1966]), 18. See also Briggs,** *Gorakhnäth,* **18.**
[89] **Ibid., 18, n. 8. "Red is the colour of Love." Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **277, n. 169.**
[90] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnäth,* **17.**
[91] **Ibid., 7.**
[92] **"Women who wear mudrä are numerous." Ibid., 10.**
[93] **Dvivedi,** *Näth Sampradäy,* **16.**
[94] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnäth,* **6.**

In a certain sense, after this ceremony the yogi ceases to be a virgin. His body is not closed anymore, there is an opening, which at the same time makes the passage of the energy through the body and the acquisition of power possible. Now, with ordinary men, whose sexuality is not sublimated and transformed, the opening that is the place of the drainage of energy (and the cause of mortality) is in the lower part of the body. The Naths attempt to keep that lower aperture closed and instead, just like Siva who was the first to wear the rings, they open a space in their heads (the abode of Siva). Instead of the energy (the semen, the elixir) draining down from head to and through the penis, the yogis are attempting to reverse the process by closing the lower hole and opening the one in the upper part of their body. This should facilitate the ascent of the powerful but latent energy of the *kundalini sakti* that is ordinarily situated in the lowest *cakra* and that yogis attempt to 'wake up' and send upward along the central channel *(susumna)* in the spinal cord. However, irrespective of the fact whether the semen goes up or down, both situations represent instances of an erotic process. The only difference between the two is the difference between the gross and the subtle forms of manifestation of the sexual power.

Sexual Powers of Fertility Among Yogis

A curious element in many legends and stories about the Nath yogis is their ability to generate human beings out of 'dead matter.' "The Nath Siddhas, and Gorakh in particular, are great yogic progenitors, fecundating women with their yogic 'seed,' which they carry in their wallets *(jholl)* in the form of rice grains, barleycorns, ashes, or water in which their loincloth has been washed. A number of Gorakh's illustrious disciples,

including Guga Pir and Carpati, are conceived and born in this way." The story of the birth of Gorakhnath himself is a typical example:

Once, during his travels, Matsyendranath enjoyed the hospitality of a child-less couple. As a sign of his appreciation, while he was leaving he offered the woman some of the magical dust, *vibhuti,* from his sack, ordering her to eat of it and that as a result she will conceive a child. Persuaded by her friends, she decided not to eat it but threw the dust in a pit outside the village. Twelve years later, Matsyendra returned and asked about the child. The woman admitted her deed. Matsyendra went to the pit and call the child, "Come out!" "Greetings, guru!" replied the voice from the pit. When the curious villagers removed the soil, they found a divine, beautiful child sitting at the bottom in a yogic position. The child came out and took the dust from Matsyendra's feet who gave him the name Gorakh and prophesized his future glory and fame.[96]

This same ability to produce living beings, without recourse to the usual means of achieving the same result, is also told of Gorakhnath. "In the contest with Jalandharnath (Gopicand legend), Gorakhnath turned horse dung into locusts, or dung and a blanket, or a bundle of grass, and then into a human body and infused it with life." In the *Sri Gorakhnath Caritr* he makes a 'driver' for kids' chariot out of clay and infuses

no ,

him with life using the *samjivan mantra.* Briggs reports that "Gorakhnath had a magic bag, or wallet, of wonderful potency, from which he drew gifts of various kinds. He took out of it the barley grains, or the apple, or the flowers, or the ashes which conferred the

[95] **White,** *Alchemical Body,* **289.**

[96] **This famous story is summarized in Prakash Nath Tantresh,** *Rajasthan ka Nath Sampraday* **(Ajmer: Arya Brothers Bookseller, 1993), 29-31. Camanlal Gautam,** *Sri Gorakhnath Caritr a,* **specifies that Gorakh is born as a result of a boon given to Matsyendra by the Sun god (see pp. 5-10). A variant recorded in the** *Buddhapurana* **substitutes Matsyendra with Siva while otherwise agreeing with the story. See** *Matsyendra Saiphita,* **30-1. See also, White,** *Alchemical Body,* **288 and Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,* **182.**

[97] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,* **190.**

gift of sons..." Briggs' conclusion is that "like many other great ascetics he was able to grant children to barren women."[100] It follows that an important element of Gorakh's greatness lies in his powers of fecundity.

Other Nath yogis were also believed able to perform this type of miraculous production of human beings. David Gordon White quotes the following story from the book *Siva-Goraksa* by Pir Premnath, where Gorakh's disciple Ratannath creates a boy from the elements of his own body:

> After eating the food from the first plate, Ratannath then stood before the second plate. Having pronounced a *mantra,* he then caused ashes to flow from his body, after the fashion of Siva. These he fashioned into a ball, which he placed before the second plate of food. He then announced that the ball of ashes would eat the food sitting in front of it. ... The ball then split and a laughing, fully formed boy emerged from it and set about eating the food on the plate before him.[101]

The stories of this kind are numerous in the Nath lore. Here we find again all the main constituents of their make-up interwoven: eros, occult, power. Again, sexual symbols signify esoteric realities and occult powers refer to sexuality. For example, the story of the production of the divine child, through the incubation period of twelve years, may have as its referent the yogic trajectory, "the standard period of preparation of a yogin in the traditions under study here. Twelve years, the mystic homologue of a year of twelve months in which the seasons and the dance of sun and moon are brought full circle..."[109] The stories in question also contribute to the image of the yogis as powerful persons, miracle-workers, whose ability to produce (and sometime, revive) human beings places

[98] **Camanlal Gautam,** *Sri Gorakhndth Caritr* **(Bareli: Sanskriti Sansthan, 1998 [1981?]), 17-21.**
[99] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,,* **199.**
[100] **Ibid., 190.**
[101] **Qtd. in White,** *Alchemical Body,* **287.**

them into a god-like category. But the undertones of this generative ability are also sexual. After all, sexuality is the usual avenue for generation of the living beings. It is only that with the Siddhas this ability is of a different sort. Here again we face that fact that where there are *jogis* there is sexuality, but of a transmuted kind. While the ordinary men obtain children by releasing the semen through the lower parts of their body, the yogis, who have shut closed those nether openings, produce them through their fingers. Their generative ability is in fact without location since it is freely in their possession, amiable to their wishes, filling their whole bodies with its potency. And what a better image for an erotic ascetic (which every Nam, on the model of Siva, potentially is) than a renouncer who is able to make barren women give birth to the sons? Generative potency is overflowing from the Siddhas: those who have mastered sexuality have really become the *sexual* masters.

Sexuality at the Root of the Tension between Gorakhndth and Matsyendrandth

According to the traditional accounts, Matsyendranath was the first human disciple of the god Siva and the first proponent of Hatha Yoga. The preeminent position within the hierarchy of the Nath *panth* is, however, usually reserved for Matsyendra's disciple Gorakhnath. The reason for this attitude lies in the fact that Matsyendranath's career is less immaculate than his disciple's. Matsyendra is, in fact, a 'fallen yogi' who had forgotten and lost his way in the company of women and it was only through the efforts

On Matsyendranath, see *Matsyendra Saiphita.* "There is evidence to state that the secret YoginT Kaula of Matsyendra, which he expounded in Kamarupa where every woman was a YoginT, was named after them for in their company he could discover this new cult." V.W. Karambelkar, "Matsyendranatha and his YoginT Cult," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 31 (1955), 365.

of his pupil that he was brought back to his senses and the path of yoga.[104] Gorakhnath's greatness is established through the fact that he has proven to be a truer yogi than his own teacher. It is a telling sign of this state of affairs that in the visual representations Gorakh is usually depicted as a young man, an eternal youth, while Matsyendra is shown as an old man with the white hair, displaying thus outwardly the negative results of the loss of semen. As a *pad* from the *Sayings of Gorakh* puts it, "All the juice *[ras]* is gone, / Only refuse remains. / Oh dear devotee Macchindranath, / Yoga is [thus] not possible!"[105]

At the heart of the situation seems to be a difference between what may be called a *tantric* versus *yogic* approach to sexuality, understood as an avenue of spiritual practice. What Gorakhnath stands for is an internalization of sexual dynamics within the body-mind complex of a celibate yogi.[106] In other words, Gorakh approaches eros esoterically. The sexual polarity is established between several elements of the subtle body, whose constituents are given appropriate gender and sexual significations. We have the relationship between the two main *cakras* that are the inner loci of the male (Siva in the *sahasraf)* and female (Sakti in the *mulddhdr)* energies within the yogic body. The goal of practice is, it will be remembered, to make these two unite, which is a fact with obvious erotic reference. At another level, the sexual polarity is established through the relationship between the *kundalini,* which, although otherwise glossed as female, assumes a male and phallic *function* during the ascent from the base of the spine towards

[104] **On the subject of Gorakhnath's victory over the forces of temptation that made his teacher lose his way in the midst of pleasures of the householder's lifestyle, see Vidyapati's short play in Maithili with Hindi translation,** *Goraksa Vijaya: Kavikokil Vidyapati-krt,* **ed. Harimohan Misra (Patna: Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad, 1974). The same subject is treated by medieval Bengali Muslim author Sheikh Faizulla. For a Russian translation of his work see** *Pobeda Gorokho,* **trans. I. A. Tovstih (Moscow: Nauka, 1988).**
[105] **GBP 2: 4. "ras-kus bahi gaTla, rahi gal choT / bhagat machindranath puta, jog na hoT."**
[106] **As several authors have pointed out, Gorakh' solution against the temptation of sexuality in social encounters consists in treating every women as either a mother or a sister. See esp. Cashin,** *Ocean of Love,* **and Gold,** *Carnival of Parting.*

head, during which process it penetrates the female lotuses within the subtle body. The reader will recall Ramakrishna's account of this process, where the experience is described in terms of its orgasmic quality.[107] And finally, the sexual polarity within the body of an individual yogi is established through the hermaphroditic nature of the subtle body,[108] whose divine prototype is Siva in the *ardhandrlsvara* form.[109]

In her study of the Bauls of Bengal, whose notions of the magical efficacy of semen resemble those of the Naths but whose sexual practices involve the participation of women, Jeanne Openshaw comments on her impression "that, in certain contexts, ... [they] deliberately emphasise the role of prestigious 'yogic' practices such as *pranayam* and total seminal retention. In others, they are more concerned to differentiate the path of *yoga* (associated for them with respiratory techniques and *esoteric practice without a woman)* from their own path - that of *ras* or *bastu* (fluids, substance)."[110] However, it is not correct to assume that the Nath yogis never engage in the ritual practice of the physical sexual act.[111] The so-called *vajrolT mudrd* is one, and probably the most notorious, example to the contrary. The gist of this technique consists in the urethral suction of the commingled semen and vaginal blood. Interestingly enough, this practice is associated with Matsyendranath[112] and, equally interesting, it was later "internalized in

[107] See Kripal, *Kali's Child,* 127-8 and passim.

[108] "According to Tantric and Hatha-yogic belief, ... the region of the body below the naval [sic] is the region of Sakti, while the region above the navel is the region of Siva ..." Dasgupta, *Obscure Cults,* 230.

[109] See Goldberg, *Lord Who Is Half Woman.*

[110] Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bauls of Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 205; emphasis added.

[111] Dasgupta writes that "in spite of this general attitude of aversion towards women, the Nath Siddhas also practiced some well-known processes of yoga like VajraulT, AmaraulT, SahajaulT, etc. in the company of women. But these practices are yogic practices, pure and simple, in which women are neither philosophised upon, nor idealised." Dasgupta, *Obscure Cults,* 250. On these practices, see *Hathayogapradipika* 3: 82-96.

[112] "This was the basic doctrine of Matsyendranath's venerable YoginT Kaula: women, because they are embodiment of the Goddess and because it is through their 'wombs' that the lineage is perpetuated, have something that men do not; it is therefore necessary for males to tap into the female in order that that boundless source of energy be activated within them. This fluid power substance *(dravya)* or lineage nectar

certain hathayogic sources, in which one internally drinks the 'brilliant white-red nectar'."[113]

It then appears that Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath represent two distinct, and often antagonistic, schools of thought and practice related to the use of sexuality as a spiritual technique. Matsyendra and his *Yogini Kaula* stand for what may be designated as a 'hard-core' *tantric* path in which the sexual act is performed physically and which involve the participation of women. Gorakh represents a 'hard-core' *yogic* way of internalized sexuality inscribed within the body of a celibate ascetic.[114] The latter school has proven to be dominant - at least judged by the overall tenor of the *Sayings of Gorakh* - and the sporadic instances of the Nath yogis performing physical sexual act, involving ejaculation and subsequent withdrawal of the semen, are the lingering remnants of the practice once originated by, or at least associated with, Matsyendranath.[115]

In the *Sayings of Gorakh,* there are several reflections of this situation. Gorakhnath often uses very strong language in order to convey to his teacher the message of incompatibility between yoga and pleasure, *bhoga,* making problematic, it should be noted, the indiscriminate inclusion of the Naths under the rubric of tantra.[116] "Listen Machindra, Gorakh is speaking! /.../ You have not performed *nirati* nor listened well./

(kuldmrta), **also simply known by the term 'true being'** *(sadbhava)* - **the purest substance found in the human body - is unique to women in their multiple roles as sexual consorts, practitioners of yoga, and biological mothers." White,** *Alchemical Body,* **200.**

[113] **Ibid.**

[114] **It should be understood that I am contrasting 'yoga' with 'tantra' within the limits imposed by my own conceptual model. It is a matter of fact that there are non-celibate yogis as there are celibate tantrics.**

[115] **A reference to one such practice that obviously assumes the performance of the sexual act but advises against the ejaculation is given in the following precept: "Those who, in making love, preserve the** *bindu, /* **They are Gorakh's brothers." GBS 141. "bhog karamtam je byand rakhai te gorakh ka gurbhaT."**

[116] **As already mentioned, some scholars and particularly White consider tantra and yoga to be distinct disciplines.**

.../ Straying down among women, there is no yoga!" The principal danger of sexual activity on the part of the yogi lies, from the perspective of Gorakh, in the loss of semen that should have been transmuted into elixir: "Oh guru-ji, don't do such a thing! / Because of that, you are wasting the *mahdras amrt.*"[118] "Therefore I say, Oh guru, / Everything happened because of your naivete. / You have lost all the juice, Oh guru / In the snare of the tigress."[119] In order to persuade both his teacher and other yogis from the involvement with women, Gorakh does not hesitate to engage in rather strong misogynic[120] diatribes against what he calls the 'tigresses' and 'vampires' *(rdksasis):* "

> The vagina is a vampire. The vagina is a vampire
> Without teeth, she devoured the whole world.
> The wise have saved their head with wisdom;
> The people have forgotten their own selves. [Refrain]
>
> During the day, the tigress sleeps,
> And at night she sucks from the body.
> [Man] does not understand the nature of sexual lust,
> So he keeps and nurtures the tigress in his own house.
>
> People who rub skin against skin
> Waste the body day by day.
> They are not introduced to the self-knowledge at the *guru's* mouth,
> So the tigress devours them.
>
> The tigress gives birth, the tigress kills,
> The tigress rears the body.

[117] GBP 3: refrain, 1. "sunau ho machindra gorakh bolai... / nirati karlnairn nlkam sunijyau ... / kammnT bahtam jog na hoi."

[118] GBP 43: refrain. "gurujT aisa karam na kTjai, tathaim amlrn maharas chTjai."

[119] GBP 2:2. "etaim kachu kathllaguru, sabai bhaila bholai / sarb ras khoTla guru baghamm cai kholai."

[120] Ann Grodzins Gold has advanced the view that the misogyny of the Nath Siddhas is not a straightforward affair and that it is counterbalanced by the respect shown to women as natural possessors of magical power. Discussing this issue in the context of the Rajasthani folk songs about the famous Nath yogi Gopi Chand, she writes: "As a whole the Rajasthani Gopi Chand transmits a world view in which gender is construed flexibly, the attributes of the different sexes are at times interchangeable, and misogyny coexists with a view of women as definitely the better half. Both in love and in magic, women command the power of *maya,* and no ordinary male can overcome this - although the very best of yogis can outdo women by rejecting the former and co-opting the latter." "Gender and Illusion in a Rajasthani Yogic Tradition," in *Gender, Genre, and Power,* 126.

The tigress roars at the side of the king of death:
Gorakh Raya has seen [through] her.[121]

In conclusion, Gorakhnath (and by extension the Nath yogis in general) approaches sexuality in an esoteric manner by internalizing the sexual dynamics and erotic polarity within the single body of a celibate ascetic. In this way, sexuality remains structurally present and operative, although its performance is conducted in a non-ordinary way. Instead of a sexual act between two persons culminating in the man's ejaculation, a yogi conducts an imaginative process of joining of the opposites, where the nature of the complementary poles to be united is also sexual and gender specific in at least some of its symbolic registers. That the yogic work with internal energies may results in orgasmic experiences is evident, for example, in the case of Ramakrishna, as Kripal has shown. There is no reason to doubt that the experience is a common one; as Frits Staal asserts, "connections between *kundalirii* and sex are undeniable." One may speculate that it depends only on the type of a discourse preferred, whether the sexual connotations of the process will be emphasized or not. Of course, there are yogis that follow in the footsteps of Matsyendra, who perform the actual physical act of sex with women and who resort to the practices such as *vajrolT mudrd,* but they constitute a minority, and thus exception to the above statements.

[121] **GBP 48: refrain, 1,3,4. "bhag räkasi lo, bhag räkasi lo, bimnam dantäm jag khäyä lo / gyämnl hutä su gyämn mukh rahiyä, jTv lok äpai äp gamväyä lo /tek/ din din bäghinT sTmyä lägl, rati sarlrai sokhai / visai lubdhTtat na büjhai, ghari lai bäghnlm pokhai /// cämmaim cämm ghsamtä loT, din din chTjai käyä / äpä parcai gur mukhi na cinhaim, phäri phäri bäghnlm khäyä** *131* **bäghnlm upäyä bäghnT nipäyä bäghnl pälT käyä / bäghnT däkrai jauriyom päkhrai, anbhui gorakh räyä** *141."*

[122] **Frits Staal, "The Himalayas and the Fall of Religion," in** *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routs,* **ed. Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982), 49. He also notes, "The notion that** *kundalirii* **is related to orgasm is even supported by contemporary popular magazines." Ibid.**

We may conclude, on the basis of analytical reflection, that Gorakhnath carries the principle of esoteric internalization to its logical end. The body of a yogi, in addition to its being a *microcosmic* mirror of the universal plenum, contains within its subtle dimensions the inner reflections of the Great Lord Siva and his consort and complement, the goddess Sakti. The union between these two, the union that is also the ultimate nature of reality, is often represented in the form of sexual coupling, and the yogi through his practice makes this principle an experiential fact. As Jean Varenne observes, "Shiva's paradise is a region of delight where the supreme being ... joys eternally in his union with his shakti: the final liberation is thus presented as being a sort of perpetual wedding feast, an orgasm without end." Yogic practice related to the ascent of *kundalini* corresponds esoterically to the sexual play between the Great Lord and the Goddess. As already indicated, a more narrowly defined *tantric* approach would be to *maintain* the relationship of polarity between the *two* partners, identifying man with Siva and woman with Sakti. Gorakhnath's approach incorporates important elements of sexuality but within the lifestyle of a celibate yogi. A dose of paradoxicality inherent in this situation is not so unusual if one keeps in mind the fact that the yogi is an earthly representative of the god whose nature is in general full of contradictions, the erotic ascetic lord of yoga, the Great Lord Siva.[124]

Qtd. (with a corrected transliteration) in ibid. 48-9. See Jean Varenne, *Yoga and the Hindu Tradition,* **trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 175.**

[124] **A superb study on this subject is Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty,** *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* **(London: Oxford University Press, 1973). Kripal's** *Kail's Child* **explores aspects of this issue from a psychoanalytically informed perspective.**

CHAPTER 3

THE NATH SIDDHAS AND ESOTERICISM OF SPEECH

I will ask one *sabad,* please answer, merciful teacher!
How can an old one become a child?
How can an open flower become a bud?
Whoever can answer what has been asked, he is a Gorakh!

Gorakh Bam (GBS 86)

On its reverse journey, the *bindu* undergoes transformations. In the median juncture towards its final spiritual form as the elixir, it assumes at the level of the heart, in the *andhat cakra,* an intermediary aspect as the subtle sound or speech. At this point, "the yogin perceives an inner spontaneous sound *(anahatanada)*"[1] or he hears the divine word *(sabda).*[2] For that reason, in this chapter I intend to interrogate the relationships between esotericism, power, and various manifestations of linguistic and related phenomena to which I gave the common denominator of 'speech' in the title above. My purpose in doing so is to establish the presence of esoteric factors in the way the Nath yogis approach and employ language, understood as a broad category that also includes acoustic and aural phenomena without semantic and syntactic attributes.

Thematically, my concerns will focus on the concepts of *mantra, sabad,* and *nad.* Starting from the assumption that the esoteric nature of these topics is evident, and keeping in mind the fact that they were given solid treatment in the general scholarship

[1] **Silburn,** *Kundalini,* **122.**
[2] **See Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **98.**

on tantra, I will be less expository and more intent on evidencing their presence and role in the teaching of the *jogis,* especially as attested in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* In addition, I want to explore the esoteric usage of rhetoric, which we encounter in the riddles of the 'upside-down' *(ultabamst)* and 'twilight' or 'intentional' language *(sandha-* or *sandhyabhdsa).*

The esotericism of speech is related to the issue of power on several levels. The point I want to emphasize is that the power of language is sometimes inherently magical (for example, *mantras* are infused with the occult potency), sometimes it stems from the elite nature of esoteric knowledge, while being simultaneously reinforced by the mechanisms of belief upheld by the social environment.[4] The rhetorical employment of esoteric language also serves as a powerful tool in the process of attracting the new disciples, as much as it manifests itself as an enigmatic discourse that transcends the mere bookish learning associated with the pundits. In this way, it carries also the connotations of social critique: esoteric discourse as a source of power that denounces power based on exoteric knowledge.

In the concluding part of this chapter, I reflect critically on the lack of engagement with the power of language in the Faivrian model. I assert the conviction and proposal that esotericism in general may even be understood as a particular mode of discourse. To the degree that language and discursive practices create our reality, the esoteric discourse *ipso facto* generates esotericism as such. From the point of view that privileges language as the foundation of reality - and this view is not uncommonly

[3] *Mantras* **are occult formulae, while both** *sabad* **and** *nad* **are experienced internally and represent results of successfully performed yogic practice.**
[4] **See Mauss,** *General Theory of Magic,* **91-7.**

encountered in India - it may be less proper to refer to 'esoteric discourse' than to a proposition that esotericism *is* a discourse.

I suggest opening this chapter with some observations of a general kind. I would like to advance the proposal that there is an issue of power related to the fact that the Nam Siddhas employ vernacular languages in order to transmit their teaching. Expressed succinctly, the knowledge as power based on the mastery of Sanskrit and associated with pundits is replaced by the power that has its source in the mastery of esoteric discourse. Let me elaborate on this point.

VERNACULARS AND ESOTERICISM

According to both popular and scholarly consensus, the Náth Siddhas were among the first religious groups in medieval North India to use vernacular language(s) in order to express and transmit their ideas and mode of practice. "Matsyendranáth ... was one of the first writers in Bengali," asserts Kalyani Mallik, "and Gorakhnáth was probably the first prose writer in Hindi."[5] In addition, the content of their poetry, as exemplified by *The Sayings of Gorakh,* is often mediated by the employment of motifs and metaphors that refer to quotidian tasks and occupations of the common people, artisans and peasants. What is the significance of this fact? A possible answer is that it represents a gesturing away from the orthodox and normative ordering of social and spiritual reality usually associated with the institution of the *varnásramadharma* and sanskritic culture.

[5] **Kalyani Mallik,** *Siddha-Siddhánta-Paddhati and Other Works of the Natha Yogis* **(Poona: Oriental Book House, 1954), 1. " ... Gorakhnáth is claimed to have been an early writer of Hindi poetry and he is further claimed to have been the first known Hindi (or Punjabi) prose-writer." Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **373. "From the early Middle Ages, perhaps as early as the eighth or ninth century, Siddhas and Yogis, mostly low-cast people, had been preaching their Gospel in the common tongue,** *bhdsd,* **in some form of Western Apabhramsha or old Bengali." Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **110. The role of the Náths in the spread**

It seems that the use of vernacular by the Naths indicates not so much a programmatic rejection of the medium of Sanskrit as it signifies a lack of serious interest in it. As a matter of fact, a number of works authored by the Siddhas do exist in Sanskrit, many of which are attributed to Gorakhnath.[6] But there can be no doubt that the fame and the general image of the *jogls* rest on their vernacular poetry and the stock of legends and stories about them, not on their Sanskrit treatises. For Sanskrit implies and presupposes a distinct culture and intellectual complexity that is irrelevant for the purpose of control of the body and the attainment of occult powers, which is the main objective of the yogis. Sanskrit indicates a gesture of approval of the *varnasramadharma,* it conveys reverence toward Vedas and *brahmins,* it is relevant to the institution of the 'Temple Hinduism' - none of which is essential for the way of life envisioned by the Naths.

Instead of the elitism related to sanskritic culture, the Nath Siddhas developed an elitism of the esoteric discourse. What are the elements of this discourse - the 'twilight' and the 'upside-down' language - and what are the strategies of its deployment in the works of the Siddhas? What is the esoteric use of rhetoric? By what mechanisms of deployment does it translate into power? I will try to provide answer to these queries in the final part of this chapter. At this point, let it suffice to establish as a given that an important element in the make up of a Nath yogi refers to the mastery of certain mode of esoteric discourse. If knowledge is power, then a yogi is powerful, among other things, because he or she knows the meaning of the riddles and code words that abound, for

of vernaculars is also discussed in Ronald Stuart McGregor, *Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* **(Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), pp.21-4,** *etpassim.*

[6] **See the lists of the works in Sanskrit and Hindi attributed to Gorakhnath in Dvivedi,** *Nath Sampraday,* **98-100.**

example, in the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh.* Consequently, rhetoric, power, and esotericism inform and interpenetrate each other.

Let us continue our investigation of the esotericism of speech by moving from the general observations discussed so far to a more technical area, consisting of the concepts of *mantra, sabad,* and *nad.*

MANTRAS

Indian tradition in general ascribes a paramount importance to the power of word. The case of *mantras* is well known as is the wide range of their employment in Vedic, sacerdotal, domestic and tantric ritual. In the philosophical tradition of Sanskrit grammarians, the most sophisticated speculation on this topic is arguably represented by the Bhartrhari's concept of *sabda brahman* as the ontological foundation of manifest universe.[7] Similarly in tantric traditions, Abhinavagupta and others have developed an intricate philosophy and meditational practice related to the concept of 'mother-phonemes' or *mdtrkds}* In the disciplines of yoga, *mantras* and their 'seed' forms or *bijas* are most often used in conjunction with meditation on *cakras.* It will be remembered that initiation into the Order of the Nath Siddhas entails the transmission of a *mantra* to the yogi.[9] All of this is a common knowledge[10] and I do not intend to elaborate on this issue,

[7] **See, for example, Harold G. Coward,** *Bhartrhari* **(Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976).**
[8] **"In Hindu Tantra, the matrkas are the phonemes of the Sanskrit language, acoustic matrices that are the ground for mantric utterances." "Glossary of Foreign Terms," in** *Tantra in Practice,* **s.v. "matrka."**
"The *mantra* **should be given by the** *guru* **to disciple while performing initiatory site [sic]. The** *mantra* **uttered by** *guru* **is potent, when heard and used by the disciple leads to achievement of great powers."** *Matsyendra Samhita,* **55.**
[10] **Literature on the subject of** *mantras* **is extensive. Perhaps the most comprehensive single book is Harvey P. Alper, ed.,** *Understanding Mantras* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1991 [1st ed. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1988]). Of special interest is the essay by Harvey P. Alper, "A Working Bibliography for the Study of Mantras," ibid. 327-443, which is a gold mine of relevant information. See also Frits Staal,** *Ritual and Mantras: Rules Without Meaning* **(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996 [1st. ed. 1990]). More popular is**

except to emphasize some elements that are relevant to the main thesis and subject matter of this work.

First of all, the knowledge and possession of a *mantra* translates into knowledge and possession of power. On the one hand, this is the power of agency: by knowing the *mantra,* a yogi can both change his inner predicament and acquire access into the occult elements of his psycho-physical make-up *and* he can apply the *mantra,* usually in a ritual setting, in such a way as to influence others and produce change in his environment. On the other hand, the power that a possessor of *mantra* wields over others has its source in the element of elitism and secrecy: not everybody knows the *mantra,* not everybody knows how to use it. Sociologically speaking, the power of a *mdntrika* depends also on the belief that other people have in his or her power.[11] In this way, the esoteric knowledge and the power that it generates are both individual and collective in their reverberations; they are, in other words, both potentially gnostic and political in their nature and function.

The worth and efficacy of a *mantra* is dependent on the network of correspondences that correlate it to both individual and cosmic occult forces. It is well known that *mantras* are believed to encapsulate in their phonetic form the essence of associated gods and goddesses. To meditate on the *mantra* is then equivalent to meditation on a particular divine figure. Similarly, *mantras* are correlated to the *cakras* in the subtle body of the yogi.[12] Meditation and mental or audible repetition of the *mantras*

Harold G. Coward and David J. Goa, *Mantra: Hearing the Divine in India* **(Chambersburg, PA: Anima, 1991). Padoux's** *Vac* **remains unsurpassed masterpiece on the subject of** *mantra* **within Hindu tantrism.**

[11] "Thus, what a magician believes and what the public believes are two sides of the same coin. ... Magic as a whole is, therefore, an object *a priory* **of belief, a belief which is unanimous and collective." Mauss,** *Theory of Magic,* **96-7.**

[12] See, for example, the list of *cakras* **accompanied by the information on the number of petals, the presiding deities with their Saktis, words, tunes, and colours for each of the** *cakras,* **in Pitambaradatta**

is supposed to lead to the 'opening' of the inner centres of occult energy, which culminates in the experience of enlightenment and the acquisition of yogic powers, the *siddhis.* It follows that the principle that makes the work on *cakras* operative and meaningful is the esoteric *sine qua non,* the notion of correspondences.

The *mantras* are a particular *genus,* the focal (and vocal) elements in the chain of signification that ultimately leads to the 'transcendental signified' whose nature is divine, sacred. This means that chanting, concentration, and meditation on the *mantras* may be seen as a devotional activity, the purpose of which is either a contact with the divine as such, or an invocation of the sacred as power. From the perspective of orientation towards power, work with *mantras* is magical activity; from the point of recognition of power as the sacred, the same practice may be viewed as devotional. We must not forget that power is also translated and exercised in the social sphere. This is the gist of the mutual reinforcement between devotional, magical, and social repercussions resulting from the power associated with *mantras.*

In light of the Faivrian model, *mantras* microcosmically *correspond* with the *cakras,* and macrocosmically with the gods and goddesses, whose nature they encapsulate in the phonetic form. In this way, they *mediate* between physical and transcendental levels of reality, serving as a bridge between human, *imaginal,* and divine spheres. As the ontological ground of phenomenal manifestation, they are co-equal with the ultimate reality, and for that reason they may be understood as exemplars of the *living nature.* They have the power to *transmute* an ordinary human being into immortal adept. They are typically *transmitted* from the teacher to a disciple within the context of the

Barthwal, *Traditions of Indian Mysticism Based Upon Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry* **(New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1978), 164-5.**

ritual of initiation. And, to make an observation of a more general nature, the fact that same *mantras* are often used in Vedic, domestic, Buddhist and Hindu tantric ritual, is a good example of an element that is accessed by divers traditions through a practice of *concordance.*

SAB AD

The term *sabad,* a vernacular form of the Sanskrit noun *sabda,* literally means 'word.' In the context of *The Sayings of Gorakh* it refers both to the poetic form (consisting, usually, of the rhymed couplet of verses) and to the inner 'Word' that becomes audible to the yogi as a result of his successful practice with the inner energies of the body. As W. H. McLeod explains, the concept of *sabad* associated with the Nath Siddhas was also influential in the Sant movement and especially to Kablr and Guru Nanak, who nevertheless reconceptualized it creatively in order to suit their respective spiritual visions.[13] Given its similarity with certain Western concepts, several scholars, some of them missionaries, have tried to draw parallel between "the *sabda* doctrine of Kablr and the platonic *logos*"[14] or to declare that "Kablr's doctrine of the Word *(sabda)* is a remarkable copy of the opening verses of St. John's Gospel."[15] The weakness of such proposals lies in the assumption that any similarity between two cultures must involve historical contacts and influences. Leaving that issue aside, as far as the *jogis* are concerned, McLeod explains that

[13] **See W. H. McLeod,** *GurüNänak and the Sikh Religion* **(New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1st ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968]), 191-4.**
[14] **Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **18.**

> the word *[sabad]* is characteristically used in conjunction with *anahad,* or *anahat,* and refers to the mystical 'sound' which is 'heard' at the climax of the *hatha-yoga* technique. The *anahad sabad* is, according to such theories, a 'soundless sound', a mystical vibration audible only to the adept who has succeeded in awakening the *kundalim* and caused it to ascend to the *susumnd.*[16]

The esoteric nature of the experience of the *sabad,* and the connection between its emergence and the achievement of yogic goals, is reconfirmed in several verses from *The Sayings of Gorakh.* One of them declares the gnostic quality of encountering the *sabad,* which takes place at the level of the uppermost *cakra:* "At the summit of the sky, the word *[sabad]* emerges into light. / There the gnostic understands the Formless One."[17] In a similar vein, another verse proclaims that "Accepting the *sabad,* duality ends." Both of these statements place emphasis on the inner quality of the experience of the *sabad,* the fact that it denotes the attainment of wisdom (that is 'unseen' i.e. esoteric), and that this wisdom is the result of the yogic practice associated with the ascent of *kundalim* (which has reached the top *cakra).* The gesture conveyed is the one that draws the line of demarcation between the 'unseen wisdom' learned at the 'summit of the sky' and the ordinary, exoteric wisdom associated with the pundits: "O pundit, why do you die fighting for knowledge?" asks Gorakh. "Know the highest place in some other way!"[19]

I would like to underscore the esoteric nature of the yogic experience of the *sabad.* First of all, it is noticeable that the concepts referring to the content of the yogic experience are fluid: they somehow merge and transform into each other. Let us picture a situation of a general sort: a yogi is trying to preserve the dissipation of the semen

[15] **Qtd. in ibid., 24. This view was proposed by G. Grierson in his article "Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians,"** *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* **(1907), 311.**
[16] **McLeod,** *GuruNanak,* **191.**
[17] **GBS 4. "gagani sikhar mahi sabad prakasya / taham bujhai alakh binamnlm."**

through the regime of celibacy. He is then attempting the process of reversal, striving to redirect the flow of semen upwards, through postures, muscular contractions and breathing exercises. So far, we are on the material level. Then, let us suppose that the yogi is bringing into practice the vocal recitation or the mental repetition of a *mantra,* in combination with some visual exercises. Corporeal, physiological, aural and visual efforts, let us suppose, finally 'wake up' the *kundalinï.* The energy is surging along the spine towards head, where it bursts into 'word' *{sabad),* which is experienced as light, with the quality of 'unseen wisdom' through which the 'duality ends.' The whole process is a display of the transformation and interpénétration of phenomenal and experiential levels of existence into each other on the basis of certain affinities, or 'sympathies,' that are categorized in the theory of esotericism as correspondences.

An interesting question at this point is, in what manner does the understanding of the *sabad* differ between Gorakhnâth, Kabïr, and Gurû Nânak? As McLeod has argued, Kabïr's understanding of the 'Word' is more mystical, whereas Nânak, while similarly acknowledging the importance of inward revelation, has in mind a more comprehensive engagement with the divine order *(hukam).*[20] They both agree on the sanctity of the inner revelation of the Word, but differ in their recommendation of the way of life and practice that lead to it. "For neither is the path to God regarded as accessible to all," writes McLeod. "In Guru Nânak's works, however, one can distinguish with much greater clarity the means whereby this spiritual sight is acquired and the path to God followed"[21]

GBS 15. "mâmnyâm sabad cukâyâ dand."

[19] **GBS 134. "pandit gyârnn marau kyâ jhûjhi / aurai lehu parampad bûjhi."**

[20] **See McLeod, *GurûNànak,* 191-4, and 199-203.**

[21] **Ibid., 194.**

It is safe to assume, therefore, that what sets apart the Nath yogis is similarly not the content nor value of the mystical experience associated with the realization of the *sabad* but the path that leads to its achievement. As far as KabTr is concerned, "the experience which it [the *sabad]* expresses is, for him, in no way dependent upon the practice of *hafha-yoga."*[22] In the case of Guru Nanak, even more emphatically 'there is no *kundalirii,* no *Ida, pingald,* and *susumna,* no *chakra,* no *pranaydm."* The crux of the matter lies in the following: for the Naths, the realization of the *sabad* certainly *does* depend on the practice of yoga associated with the corporeal regime of exercises, which is dependent on the work with the *cakras* and the subtle, occult energies of the body. The yogic work starts with, and depends upon, the body but it does not end there, for the body is valuable as a link within the chain of significations that ultimately leads to the metaphysical realms and divine encounters. The yogic work focuses on the body understood as a *microcosm* - an esoteric notion! - which is thus established as a self-sufficient and complete field of spiritual attention and endeavor. For a Nanak this is not sufficient, nor acceptable, because it does away with the larger issue of social and communal responsibility and welfare. It follows that there is a difference: the Naths, as a celibate order of yogis, do disentangle themselves from the concerns of the organized society.[24] But how problematic this position really is, keeping in mind the long and established history of renunciation in India?[25]

[22] **Ibid., 192.**
[23] **Ibid.**
[24] **The yogi householders, of course, represent a different category. They are not, however, the focus of this study.**
[25] **Patrick Olivelle suggests the following as the defining elements of ancient and medieval Indian asceticism: "1. Cutting social and kinship ties. 2. Living an itinerant life without a fixed home. 3. Mendicancy associated with the abandonment of socially recognized economic activities and the ownership of property, especially of food. 4. Abandoning ritual activities customary within society. 5. Celibacy."**

The difference between a Gorakhnath and a Kablr, for example, also lies in the approach to the issue of agency in the context of spiritual quest. As McLeod reminds us, in the case of KabTr, the Word is an arrow shot by the divine guru that pierces the heart of the man suddenly and unexpectedly.[26] The agency is on the side of the guru; the human subject can only wait, passively and patiently, for the experience. The situation is diametrically opposite in the case of the yogis: here, the experience is actively striven for. Gorakhnath sings with confidence, "I have found it, listen, I have found this good! / With firmness [I have reached] the place of *sabad. I*I had a vision of it [embodied] in form. / Then I have reached a complete faith."[27] The agency is on the side of human subject, which is in conformity with the general trend of esotericism, and more specifically with the active attitude that is typical of magic.

The exceptional quality of the yogic encounter with the realm of reality associated with the experience of *sabad* is indubitable from many accounts in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* The language of the poetry sometimes reflects, in its very form, something of the extraordinary nature of the phenomenon. For example, the verses declare: *"Sabad* is the lock, *sabad* is the key, / *Sabad* wakes *sabad. I* When *sabad* meets *sabad, sabad* is contained in *sabad."*[28] It appears as if the knowledge of the *sabad* represents the *fans et origo* of all the yogic *sadhana.*

It is also interesting to note that the power associated with the *sabad* was also ascribed by Gorakh to the Prophet Muhammad, which represents a fine example of what Faivre designates as 'the practice of concordance:' "By the *sabad he,* killed, by the *sabad*

Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism: Yatidharmasamuccaya of Yadava Prakasa, **ed. and trans. Patrick Olivelle (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1995), 15.**

[26] **McLeod,** *GuriiNanak,* **194.**

[27] **GBS 80: "paya lo bhal paya lo sabad thamn sahetT thiti / rup sahetT disan laga, tab sarva bhai paratTti."**

he revived: / Such a *pïr* [teacher] was Muhammad. / 0 *qâzï* [priest, judge], stop pretending! / Such a power is not in your body."[29] Again, it is obvious that the power of *sabad* originates from sources that are inaccessible to those who follow, and exercise authority in, the exoteric religion (such as Islamic judges). The rhetoric of the text claims Muhammad as one of those who have tapped into resources of esoteric spirituality, the fruit of which is the attainment of the *sabad,* otherwise referred to as the *yogic* experience. The doctrinal differences between Islam and the yoga of the Nâths are thus overlooked and the emphasis was placed on the mystical *experience* as the unifying factor between the two. This is another confirmation that the system of the Nâth yogis is not a religion (in the conventional meaning of the term), for the religion, unlike esotericism, is assumed to rest on the supremacy of belief and doctrine.

The notion of *sabad* is very similar in its nature to the concept of *nâd,* and both are brought into sympathetic correlation with the inner experience of the *bindu.* I would like to stress the esoteric nature of this correlation, but before doing so, we have to take into consideration the essentials of the concept of *nâd.*

NÂD

For all practical purposes, there seems to be no difference between the concepts of the *nâd* and the *sabad.* I am treating them separately only provisionally: the contextual locus of my exposition being *The Sayings of Gorakh,* I am attempting to elucidate the meaning by making references to the concepts as they appear in the text: sometimes under one, at

[28] **GBS 21. "sabadhim tàïâ sabadhim kùficï, sabadhi sabad jagâyâ / sabadhim sabad sum parcâ hûâ, sabadhim sabad samâyâ."**
[29] **GBS 10. "sabadaim mârî sabadaim jilàï aisâ mahammad pïram / tâkai bharami na bhulau kajT so bhal nahïm sarïram."**

other times under another heading. Alternatively, one could try to theorize that the notion of the *ndd* is more abstract, being purely a sound, while the *sabad* carries a more conspicuous connotation of the semantic meaning: a 'word' is a message. But this is debatable. What is certain, however, is that the experience of the inner sound signals the success in the practice of yoga. In a Sanskrit text attributed to Gorakhnáth, this fact is indicated by the following verses: "By cleansing the nadis the prana (is) restrained as desired, the digestive fire (is) kindled, *internal sound is heard* (becomes manifest), (and) one becomes diseasless."[30]

The concept of the *ndd* is given a noticeable place in the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh.* The word *ndd* means 'sound;' very often, it is used in the sense of the 'unstruck sound' *(andhat ndd).* It is a concept that is congenial to the practice of yoga and it represents the sign of a successful practice, related to the opening of the *cakras* and the ascent of *kundalinl.* As Lilian Silburn explains,

> Kundalinl, lower as she is in *mulddhdra (adhahkundalinl)*, converts into intermediate energy in the navel, then into subtle energy in the heart, in the *andhata* center, and in the throat *(visudhicakra),* and finally into superior energy *(ürdhvakundalirit)* when she reaches the *brahmarand.hra.*

The *anahat ndd* is thus related to the *andhat cakra,* which is supposed to be the locus of the emanation of the 'unstruck sound.' In the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh,* however, the experience of the *ndd* is primarily associated with the level of the uppermost *cakra.* For example, Gorakh claims that "In the circle of the sky, the unstruck [sound]

[30] **The** *Goraksa Sataka* **101. Trans, in Briggs,** *Gorakhnath,* **304. Parentheses in the original; emphasis added.**
[31] **Silburn,** *Kunaalirii.* **131.**

resounds." Or, similarly, "The unstruck sound thunders in the sky." In both of these examples, the 'sky' is an obvious reference to the *sahasrdr cakra.* Another verse specifies the 'tenth door' - also situated at the top of the head - as the spatial location of the 'meeting' between the *bindu* and the *ndd:* "The *unman*[34] yogi is in the tenth door. / Joining the *ndd* and the *bindu* [he hears] the roaring sound." It seems safe to assume that Gorakhnath associates the experience of the *nad* with the consummation of the yogic practice, characterized by the ascent of the *kundaliniio* the top of the head.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE *SABAD, NAD,* AND *BINDU*

There exists an important and interesting correlation between the yogic concepts of speech, sound, and semen. I designate these concepts with the adjective 'yogic' in order to stress their difference, their esoteric distinction as opposed to exoteric common usage and understanding. What Gorakhnath calls 'word,' 'sound,' and 'semen' *(sabad, nad,* and *bindu)* are in fact the inner correlatives of these phenomena. They are important for the yogis only insofar as they are experienced internally. In their outward manifestation - as a spoken word or spilt semen - they become vulgar, wasted, and useless. I suggest investigating this situation in some detail.

First of all, the general tendency in yoga is to re-direct upwards what naturally - and in this context, the 'natural' has the negative connotation of *samsdric* - tends to go downwards. The semen *(bindu)* has to rise up, as does the *kundalini,* breath (or one of the bodily 'winds'), word *(sabad)* and sound *(ndd).* And while these phenomena are

[32] GBS 32. "gagan mandal mem anahad bajai."
[33] GBP 22. "anahad nad gagan maim gajai." This is almost identical with GBS 177, "The unstruck word thunders in the sky" ("anahad sabad gagan mem gajai").

apparently distinct and separate in their external manifestations, in their inner aspects they tend to become more and more flexible and inter-penetrating. At the level of the perception of reality as witnessed by the yogi who has succeeded in the practice of reversal *(uljn-sadhana),*[36] at the level of the *sahasrctr cakra,* the semen, breath, word, and mind are united, interpenetrated, one. Let us see the reflection of these ideas in the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh.*

A good place to start our investigation is the *sabad* that claims, "In the house of the *nad,* the *bindu* thunders, / And sounds the silent horn."[37] We have seen in several previous examples that the inner sound is often described as 'thundering' or 'roaring.' In this verse, however, the specification is that the *bindu* is *contained* within the *nad* and that it represents the agent that generates the (yogic perception of) the sound. At the level of manifest reality, in the context of everyday speech, this statement, that 'the semen thunders in the house of the sound,' would sound rather bizarre. It is feasible then that the linguistic terms refer to the esoteric aspects of semen and sound, in the same manner that the phenomenal semen and sound correspond to their esoteric correlates. Even with this qualification the statement remains enigmatic: what is it really that Gorakhnath has in mind?

According to the theory of yoga, sounds arise as a result of union between the *by* (Skt. *bijd)* and the *bindu.* The *bij* is a monosyllabic sound / word, and the *bindu* represents its nasalization. These two constitutive elements of speech are also related to

[34] **The term 'unman' refers to the transcendental state of the mind, the mind that is 'beyond mind.' This concept will be treated more fully in the next chapter.**

[35] **BGS 135. "unman jog! dasvaim dvar / nad byand le dhumdhumkar."**

[36] **A useful treatment of the** *ulta-sadhana* **can be found in Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **229-35** *et passim.* **White's "Why Gurus Are Heavy?" explores the alchemical and yogic practice of reversal on the model of the reabsorption** *(pralaya)* **of the created universe. A good deal of relevant information is also contained in White's** *Alchemical Body* **and Eliade's** *Yoga.*

their divine counterparts: *"Bindu* denotes *Siva* and *Blja* denotes *Sakti. Nâda* evolves from the mutual communion between them. This is well known to those who are versed in all the *Âgamas."*[38] In writing, *bindu* is represented by a dot, which is also one of the meanings of the term. But *bindu* is also semen and, especially in yogic usage, semen of Siva.[39] In this way, we arrive at the complex situation where Siva as semen represents a constitutive element of the sound that is heard (as 'thundering') by a yogi at the consummation of his practice. But this is not a mere instance of multi-layered connotations of the linguistic term. *Bindu* means so many things because these things are in a certain important (esoteric!) manner mutually related and interconnected. Whether starting from the written dot, from the sound, or from the sexual secretion, one eventually (hopefully) arrives at the ultimate 'transcendental signified' which is here Siva (united with Sakti).

The link that makes possible the interconnection of the semen, word, and sound is the esoteric notion of correspondence. The experiential interpénétration of these phenomena is actualized at the level of the subtle body, created and accessed through the power of disciplined imagination. I propose that the phenomena are distinct at the exoteric level of everyday reality. They become mutually interchangeable at the level of the *mundus imaginalis:* thus 'the *bindu* thunders in the house of the *nacT.* Finally, they are ultimately one at their spiritual origin: at the level of the *sahasràr cakra,* the breath, semen, word, and sound are once again Siva, united with his Sakti.

GBS 54. "nad kai ghari byand garjai, bajant anahad turam."

[38] **These Sanskrit verses are quoted (without reference to their source) in Banerjea,** *Philosophy of Gorakhnath,* **150. The italics as in the original. The Sanskrit text is given as "Bindu Sivatmako BTja Saktir tayor mithah / Samavaya iti khyatah sarvagama-visaradaih."**

[39] **See McGregor, ed.,** *Hindi-English Dictionary,* **s.v. "bindu."**

The analogy between the *nad* and the *bindu* is also stressed in the following *sabad* from *The Sayings of Gorakh:* "Everybody says *'nad, nad,'* / But few remain immersed in the *nad.* / The *nad* and the *bindu* are like a dry stone. / Those who have mastered them have achieved success."[40] In addition to the link between semen and sound, we witness in these verses an alchemical theme that is of significant cross-cultural importance. This is the notion that the original substance from which the work starts, what was in the West termed *materia prima,* in its 'natural' form represents something ubiquitous, ordinary, and base. One starts from the ordinary 'stone' in order to gain 'the philosopher's stone.' With regards to this, alchemist George Ripley (c. 1415-90) writes, "The philosophers say that the birds and fishes bring the Stone to us, each man possesses it, it is everywhere, in you, in me, in all things, in time and in space. It presents itself *in base guise (yilifigurd).* And from it springs our *aquapermanens.*"[41] Similarly, in the text from 1526, the *Gloria Mundi,* we read that the Stone "is familiar to all men, both young and old; it is found in the country, in the village and in the town, in all things created by God; yet *it is despised by all.* Rich and poor handle it every day. It is cast into the street by servant maids. Children play with it."[42] And, to give just one more example relevant to this subject matter, the medieval writer Gerhard Dorn urges his fellow alchemists with the following precept: "Transform yourself from dead stones into living philosophic stones."[43]

It is probably safe to assume that Gorakhnath refers to the apparently ordinary nature of the *materia prima* when he says "The *nad* and the *bindu* are like a dry stone."

[40] **GBS 181. "nad nad sab koi kahai / nadhim le ko birla rahai / nad bind hai phlklsila / jihim sadhya te sidhaim mila."**

[41] **Qtd. in Mircea Eliade,** *The Forge and Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy,* **2nd ed., trans. Stephen Corrin (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978 (1st ed. 1962), 163; emphasis added. The term 'aqua permanens' refers to the elixir, that is to say, to the philosopher's stone.**

[42] **Qtd. in ibid., 163-4; emphasis added.**

[43] **Qtd. in ibid., 158.**

The sound and the semen are easily accessible and due to their ubiquitous nature they do not provoke high respect. But those who have really mastered them have become Siddhas for both are the potential openings into the divine realm. We have just seen that Siva is *esoterically* present in (or, represented by) the semen, as well as being a constitutive element of the sound. What is important to emphasize in this regard is the fact that the transmutation of the 'base' elements of reality into their divine counterparts makes full sense within the model of esotericism. The *ndd* and the *bindu* correspond to each other just as they correspond to the Great Lord. They are open to transmutations and those who master them are themselves transmuted into the Siddhas (i.e., those 'who have achieved success'). Due to the invisible divine presence and the fact that they are able to change, the *ndd* and the *bindu* may be understood as specimens of living nature. And the alchemical and yogic work with them is accomplished through the powers of imagination. All the major characteristics of esotericism as defined by Faivre are present and observable in the yogic treatment of the *ndd* and the *bindu* .

While still on the subject of the correlation between speech and semen, I would like to draw attention to the connection between the acts of ejaculation and locution. To utter a word and to eject semen are structurally and functionally similar actions. This notion is observable even in the semantic range of the English verb 'to ejaculate,' which may refer to either a sexual or a speech act. In the case of the Nath Siddhas, it is significant that we come across precepts against (vain and useless) talking almost as often as against the spilling of the semen. In order to gain access to the inner form of the *bindu,* the physical semen has to be contained within the hermetically closed body of a yogi. Similarly, in order to experience the inner *sabad,* the speech of the yogi has equally to be

restrained. Those who do otherwise, those who boast of their knowledge - pundits and false yogis - they talk too much and that is the reason why the Siddhas ridicule them: "A cat eats an educated parrot, / And in the pundits hands [only] book remains."[44]

The structural correspondence between the ejaculation of the word and the emission of the semen is, I believe, obvious. There are verses in *The Sayings of Gorakh* where this correspondence is not only tacitly assumed, but also explicitly stated. The following two *sabads* belong to the latter group:

> The tongue and the penis are one channel;
> The one who keeps it closed is saved from death.[45]
> O learned scholars don't be arrogant!
> The one who has conquered the tongue has conquered everything.
>
> Gorakh says, Ours is a difficult path.
> Keep the tongue and the penis under control!
> People who spend time in the practice yoga,
> Are not eaten by Time.[46]

In another of the *sabads* from *The Sayings of Gorakh,* we find the following description of a Nath yogi: "A sitting *avadhut* is like an iron rod, / A moving *avadhut* is like a fist of wind. / A sleeping *avadhut* is a living corpse, / A talking *avadhut* is a parrot in a cage."[47] In a similar spirit, another *sabad* advises against talking as follows: "Gorakh says, 'O *avadhut,* listen: / Be like this in the world: / Look with your eyes, listen with your ears, /

GBS 119. "parhyâ gunyâ sùbâ bilâï khâyâ pandit ke hâthi rah gai pothl."

[45] **Lit. 'he tricks death,' "bancai kâl."**

[46] **GBS 219-20. "jibhyâ indrî ekaim nâl / jo râkhai so bancai kâl / pandit gyâmnï na karasi garab / jibhyâ jïtl jin jïtyâ sarab // gorakh kahai hamârâ khartar panth / jibhyâ indrî dïjai bandh / log jugatT maim rahai samây / tâ logï kûm kâl na khây."**

[47] **GBS 71. "baithâ avadhû loh kïkhûntl, caltâ avadhû pavan kl mûnthï / sovtâ avadhû jïvtâ mûvâ, boltâ avadhû pyafljarai sûvâ."**

But don't say anything with your mouth!" I would like to connect the attitude conveyed in these two *sabads* with what Faivre has called 'the discipline of silence.'[49] This is not so much an issue of secrecy related to the knowledge obtained through the ritual of initiation - although it is important in its own way - but a more subtle requirement. The point is that one obtains esoteric knowledge in a special way, through the inner work, and one's dedication to it demands a certain sense of tact and restraint. "Do not disclose the *nad* to a careless person,"[50] urges Gorakhnath. As Faivre writes, "The sacred, that which is set apart, requires a slender partition between itself and the secular world."[51] This partition is often effectively established through the practice of silence. In this spirit we should understand constant admonitions to yogis against engagement in discussions. Others, those who speak without the necessary inner experience, are according to Gorakhnath nothing but sinners: "The learned speak having studied, / The ignorant speak out of ignorance. / They do not understand the ultimate truth. / Gorakh says, They are great sinners."[52]

RHETORIC

I will treat the rhetoric strategies of the Nath Siddhas mostly in relation to *The Sayings of Gorakh.* The fact that this poetry was composed in the vernacular makes it safe to assume that its targeted audience consisted primarily of those outside of the pale of the sanskritic culture. But the accessibility of the language is not the same as the hermeneutical

[48] **GBS 72. "gorakh kahai sunhu re avadhu jag maim aisaim rahnam / aiikhaim dekhiba kamnaim suniba mukh thaim kachu na kahnam."**
[49] **Faivre, "Esotericism," 43.**
[50] **GBS 121. "helai na khoiba nadam."**
[51] **Faivre, "Esotericism," 42.**
[52] **GBS 223. "vidya parhi ra kahavai gyamnlm / binam avidya kahai agyamn! / param tat ka hoy na marmT / gorakh kahai te maha adharmT."**

transparency of the content. A good deal of the poetry of *The Sayings* is enigmatic. Those who are not initiated into the order of the Nath Siddhas and who are not familiar with the technical jargon and code words are thus not equipped with the exegetical keys to unlock the opaqueness of the yogic discourse. The scholar who is not an initiate faces the same problem.

What was the intention behind this type of poetry? Let us, first of all, recall that this is an oral literature that is meant to be sung and that is traditionally performed, often accompanied by an instrument, by the travelling minstrel-yogis.[53] They would travel on foot from village to village, from temple to temple, performing the songs about the great Siddhas, Gorakh and Matsyendra, Gopicand and Bhartrhari in front of audiences. These songs glorified the life-style of the yogis, transmitted their teachings, and posed certain riddles, the solution to which transcends the knowledge of even the pundits. The line of social criticism addressed to pundits is prominent in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* Their authority, exoteric in its nature, is based on the knowledge of Sanskrit and what the yogis consider mere bookish learning. The Naths reject the authority of that *episteme,* claiming that real knowledge is knowledge of the body in its esoteric aspect and that only this type of knowledge leads to real power and immortality.

The language of Gorakh is most hermetically closed on those occasions when he presents his message in the form of the 'twilight' and 'upside-down' language.[54] The 'twilight language' or the *sandhyabhasa* is sometimes understood as equivalent of the 'upside-down' language, or words, the *ultabdmsi.* I would agree with Pitambaradatta

[53] **See Champion, "A Countre Courant," Gold,** *Carnival of Parting,* **and Henry,** *Chant the Names of God,* **esp. 160-89.**

Barthwal, however, in emphasizing the distinction between the two. "The *ultabdmsi* is necessarily a paradox," writes Barthwal, "while the *sandhydbhdsd* is not."[55] The main difference between the two, I suggest, lies in the following: 'twilight language' has as its referent certain esoteric *content.* The content is usually hinted at through the employment of vocabulary that signifies some ordinary sphere of activity. This is yet another allusion to the idea that in this poetry, as in alchemy, the sacred hides itself under the guise of the ordinary. For example, the manifest content of the poetry might consist of the description of a quotidian labor; the intended meaning would often refer to the work with the subtle body and *cakras.* "The small pot[56] at the confluence of three rivers got filled; / A sumptuous drink is prepared"[57] is only seemingly a description of the wine-making process; in fact, 'the small pot' refers to *djnd cakra;* 'the three rivers' are the three main mystical conduits of energy; and the 'sumptuous drink' is the elixir *(amrt).* 'Upside-down' language, on the other hand, intends to mirror, through its form, the *process* of the yogic work, consisting of the *reversal* of the ordinary human situation.

Let me provide several examples of these stylistic devices from *The Sayings of Gorakh.* I suggest exploring the 'twilight language' under two headings: 'Jargon' and 'Allegories and Riddles.' The first type of poetry is one in which a certain yogic teaching is represented through the employment of the technical jargon, and this element in itself makes the meaning nontransparent. The 'Allegories and Riddles' are self-explanatory as a category. Similarly, the 'upside-down' poetry is the one in which the content is presented in a paradoxical manner.

[54] **On 'twilight' or 'intentional' language and related issues see, among others, Dasgupta, *Obscure Cults,* 413-24; Eliade, *Yoga,* 249-54; Linda Hess, *The Bljak of Kablr,* trans. Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986 (1st ed. 1983), 136-61; and Kvasrne, *Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs.***
[55] **Qtd. in Vaudeville, *Weaver Named Kabir,* 103. See Barthwal, *Traditions of Indian Mysticism.***

Technical Jargon

'Twilight language' is sometimes understood to mean 'intentional language' where the manifest content is intended to refer to something else. A good deal of the poetry in *The Sayings of Gorakh* belongs to this category. For example, the first *sabad* in the collection mentions that 'At the summit of the sky, a child is speaking.' The usual commentarial gloss is that 'the summit of the sky' refers to the uppermost *cakra* within the subtle body. In a literal sense, this would also be an example of'intentional speech' but I will refrain from discussing instances of this sort, for the reason of their ubiquity. What I have in mind when making reference to the technical jargon of yoga as exemplified in *The Sayings of Gorakh* is very well represented by the following verses: "The twelve *kalds* [portions] make dry, and the sixteen *kolas* nourish. / [Whoever] obtains the four *kalds* lives the endless life. / Light and fire are mixed together. / [The yogi] obtains the *siddhis* and drinks four *kalds."*[co]

According to the editorial gloss of Pitambaradatta Barthwal, the phrase 'twelve *kolas'* refers to the number of petals of the *mulddhdr cakra,* associated with the Sun, which 'make dry.' The 'sixteen *kalds"* stand for the Moon in the *sahasrdr,* while the 'four *kolas'* (obtained by subtracting 12 from 16) refer to the nectar.[59]1 assume - Barthwal is silent on this point - that the 'light and fire' are also intended to stand for the Moon ('light') and the Sun ('fire'). The poem seems to be referring to the yogic process of

Alternative reading, *kupí* **instead of** *k/pa,* **accepted. See Barthwal,** *Gorakh Barn,* **122, n. 18.**

[57] **GBP 28: 3. "trkuti saňgam kupí bhariyá, mad nlpajyá apáram."**

[58] **GBS 89. "bara kalá sokhai sola kalá pokhai, cári kalá sádhai anant kalá jTvai / Oram dhuram jot! jválá sTdhi sádhant cári kalá pTvai."**

[59] **See Barthwal, ed.,** *Gorakh-Bárii,* **31-2.**

joining the energies of the two main *cakras* in the body. It is difficult to arrive at this level of comprehension unless the technical jargon of yoga is familiar.

The following *sabad* is also representative of the poetical style that uses technical jargon in order to express the yogic message, although in part its style is straightly metaphorical: "[When] the first and the second are joined with the third, / Check the breath at the western gate. / The oil is not spent, the flame is not extinguished, / Says the *nath* who has become immortal."[60] According to Barthwal, 'the first and the second' in these verses refer to two of the three main channels in the subtle body, the *ird* and the *pingald,* which are joined with 'the third,' the central channel, *susumna.*[61] This situation is the main objective of yogic practice. It follows that, if this condition is met, the yogi is supposed to acquire the immortal life: he has preserved 'the oil' and the 'light' of his life is not going to be extinguished. And while the final part of this poem employs the metaphorical expressions for human life - the oil and the burning flame - that are arguably easily understood by the general audience, the opening part that deals with 'the first, the second, and the third' is an instance of the technical jargon that is penetrated with much more difficulty.

Similar to the previously quoted *sabad* is the following, which also presents a string of the unexplained numbers: "When sitting, the twelve; when moving, the eighteen; / When sleeping, the thirty are broken. / When speaking, the sixty-four are broken. / Why should I sing praises to God?"[62] Barthwal suggests that the numbers refer to various types of breath and that the whole poem points to a type of chanting which

[60] **GBS 187. "ik£i bikini trikuti sandhi pachim dvare pavanam bandhi / khu^ai tel na bfljhai dlya bolai nath nirantari huva."**
[61] **Barthwal, ed.,** *Gorakh-Bdm,* **63.**

essentially consists of conscious breathing *(ajapajap)* but the terms are technical and their purport is in general rather unfamiliar.

Poems in which the predominant vocabulary consists of technical jargon are most probably meant as an instruction for the yogis, not the lay populace. Their natural environment is a manual of yoga, such as the Sanskrit *Haihayogapradipika.* And although their proper technical meaning escapes the interpretative abilities of ordinary persons, their public performance nevertheless achieves certain tangible results. This poetry presents itself as a mode of discourse that although enigmatic in its content leaves no enigma as to the fact that *jogis* actually do understand both the message and the methods of practice to which it alludes. In this sense, it serves the function of Bourdieu's 'symbolic capital' *{vide infra).* Poetry constructed in the form of allegories and riddles, on the other hand, probably has as its main addressees the laymen, the important subcategory and the constant target of criticism and ridicule consisting of the pundits.

Allegories and Riddles

The allegories and riddles in *The Sayings of Gorakh* are also enigmatic in their meaning, but unlike the poems, in which the narrowly defined technical jargon of yoga predominates, they utilize metaphors of a more generally understandable nature. As is the case with the majority of the poems in this collection, the subject matter is related to the concerns of yoga, understood in accordance with typical *Nathist* ideas about the value of semen preservation and the knowledge of occult aspects of the body. The enigmatic aspect of this poetry is potentially attractive to the new recruits and enthusiasts of yoga,

[62]GBS274."baitham barai calat a^harai, sutam tu^ai tis / kalthan karamtam causafci tutai, kyau bhajiv au jagdis."

while at the same time it serves to underline the message that exoteric knowledge is not fit to deal with the paradoxes of the yogic way of life. In order to contextualize these remarks, let us consider several examples. As far as the allegorical poems are concerned, I trust that the following *pad* shall be representative of the kind:

> Take hold of that vine, o *avadhut,* take hold of that vine,
> Gorakhnath knows [how].
> It has no leaves or root, no flower and no shadow,
> And it grows without water. [Refrain]
>
> The grove of the body is your garden, o *avadhut,*
> [Where] the true *guru* has planted a creeper.
> A man waters it often,
> And a nice vine flourished up to the house.
>
> Its root is the Moon, o *avadhut,*
> And the leaves are the Sun.
> The fruit is the full Moon.
> Understand that [its] jiva is the knowledge of the *guru.*
>
> The vine is on fire, o *avadhut,*
> The fire reaches the sky.
> As soon as the creeper starts burning,
> New shoots emerge.
>
> From the cut vine new shoots spring up;
> If watered, it dries up.
> Ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:
> It always remains new.[63]

What is this vine that Gorakh sings about in this *pad?* Does it refer to the human body[64] or to the knowledge of reality[65] or to the unruly nature of the human mind? It is anybody's guess and that is precisely my point: the language of the poem is potentially

GBP 17. "tat bell lo tat bell lo, avadhu gorakhnath jamni / dal na mul pahup nahim chaya, viradhi karai bin pamni / tek/ kaya kumjar teri bari avadhu, sat gur beli rupamni / puris pamnti karai dhaniyamnau nikai bali ghari amni / 1 / mul edva jedva sasihar avadhu, pamn edva jadva bhamnam / phal edva jedva punim canda. jiu jou jamn sujnam *12 1* **beldiyam dau lagi avadhu, gagan pahumti jhala / jim jim belim dajhba lagi, tab melhai kumpal dala / 3 / katat beli kumpal melhi simcatram kuthlaye / machindr prasadaim jati gorakh bolya, nit navelri thaye / 4 /."**

[64] **Vaudeville when referring to the KabTr's use of the metaphor, in** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **182.**

open to anybody who is willing to try to penetrate it. It employs a metaphor, rather than a technical jargon (such as 'first and second are joined with the third,' which is too meager as a metaphor). If the meaning nevertheless escapes the reader (or, rather, the hearer), the poem is in itself still sufficiently consistent and engaging to be able to sustain a reasonable amount of attractiveness and provoke interest. Its enigmatic core is a captivating mystery. This is even truer for those poems that are formally best classified as riddles. The following *pad* belongs to the latter category:

> O master *avadhut,* guess what this is?
> Neither the sky nor the earth,
> Neither the moon nor the sun,
> Neither a day nor a night. [Refrain]
>
> It is [neither] *omkar,* [nor] *nirdkdr* [formless].
> It is neither subtle nor gross.
> It is neither tree nor leaf,
> It does not flower, nor does it give fruit.
>
> It is neither branches nor root,
> It is neither tree nor creeper,
> It is neither *sakhi* nor *sabad,*
> Neither guru nor disciple.
>
> It is neither in wisdom nor in meditation,
> It is neither in yoga nor in the yogi,
> Neither in sin nor in virtue,
> Neither in liberation nor in the liberated.
>
> It is neither born nor destroyed,
> It neither comes nor goes,
> It does not get old or die,
> It has neither father nor mother.
>
> Says Gorakhnath,
> Devotee of Machindar:
> It is neither a state of devotion,
> Nor is it ensnared in hope.[66]

[65] **Barthwal, in *Gorakh-Banl,* 206.**

[66] **GBP 35. "kaha bujhai avadhu ral gagan na dharnlm / cand na sur divas nahim raimnl / $ek / omkar nirakar suchim na asthulam per na patr phalai nahim phulam / 1 / dal na mul na vrks. na**

The enigmatic nature of the content in the poems belonging to this type is obvious. They are riddles and the riddles are interesting and attractive for the same reason that all things mysterious are attractive: they invite active participation in order to be penetrated and understood. And while the allegories and riddles are enigmatic, the poetry of the 'upside-down' category is nothing short of paradoxical. I suggest investigating some of it.

The 'Upside-down' Poems

The *ulfabâmsï* or the 'upside-down' poems are occupying a significant portion of *The Sayings of Gorakh.* This remark is almost exclusively pertinent for the *pad* portion of the text. The reason for this is simple: the *sabads* are much shorter poems and consequently provide insufficient space for the elaboration of paradoxical situations that are at the heart of this poetic form. As I have already remarked, the content of the *ulfabâmsï* poems mirrors formally the essentials of the yogic practice of reversal *(ulfa sadhana).* The world goes 'down with the flow' *(samsàr)* and the task of a yogi is to reverse the process, to bring back to the head the semen that otherwise dissipates through the nether opening, to return to the original state before the emanation of the universe has started. As a part of this process of reversal, in addition to various yogic techniques utilized for the purpose, the language itself is rearranged and 'deconstructed,' reflecting the orientation of going 'against the grain' that is so typical of tantra.

According to Mircea Eliade, the purpose of 'upside-down' language is "to project the yogin into the 'paradoxical situation' indispensable to his training. The semantic

belà, sàkhï na sabd gurû nahim cela *12 1* **gyàrnnem na dhyânem joge na juktà, pape na pumne mokhe na muktâ / 3 / upajal na binasai âvai na jai, jura na maran vàmkai bàp na mai / 4 /**

polyvalence of words finally substitutes ambiguity for the usual system of reference inherent in every ordinary language. And this destruction of language contributes, in its way too, toward 'breaking' the profane universe and replacing it by a universe of convertible and integrable planes."[67] The language thus loses its solidity and the terms and concepts become exchangeable. Correspondences come into play and analogous ideas and situations detach from their usual signifiers. The ordinary world is, in the poetry that is representative of this trend, also turned upside-down. Or perhaps, the ordinary world *is* upside-down and this poetry makes us recognize that fact. Whatever the reasons behind the employment of this kind of rhetoric may be, its effect is unmistakable. The following *pad* is a good exemplar of the 'upside-down' category:

> Nâth is saying immortal words:
> The blanket will rain, water will get wet! [Refrain]
>
> The calf is fixed [in the ground]
> And the stick is tied to it.
> The big drum walks,
> The camel sounds.
>
> The Pïpal tree sits
> On the branch of a crow,
> The cat runs away
> At the sound of a mouse.
>
> The traveler is walking,
> The road is tired;
> The bed is sleeping
> On the woman.
>
> The dog is hiding,
> The thief is barking.
> The cowherd is coming,
> The cattle is calling.

bhanat gorakhnath machindr nam dasa, bhav bhagati aur as na pasa / 5 /."

[67] **Eliade, *Yoga,* 250.**

[68] **We (Shukdev Singh and Gordan Djurdjevic) have emended Barthwal's text by replacing 'bhusa' with 'musa.'**

In the middle of the city
Is a deserted village;
The pot is below,
The pot-carrier above.

The stove burns
Inside the wood,
The bread is
Eating the baker.

An amorous woman bums,
The furnace gets warm.
In the middle of the fire
The fire shivers [from cold].

One barren woman
Was barren, but
The daughter-in law gave birth to a
Mother-in-law.

The water from the pot[69]
Goes to the well.
Gorakh sings
The upside-down song.[70]

The Symbolic Capital of the Nâth Rhetoric

Now is the time to focus on the intentions behind the rhetoric of the Nâth Siddhas. What is the purpose of the 'twilight language,' of the riddles and paradoxes that abound in *The Sayings of Gorakh'?* As I have been doing throughout this study, in this occasion also my exegetical emphasis will center on the issues of esotericism and power. The language of the Siddhas is mysterious and secret because they are a secret order and full access to

'Gagrî' is substituted for Barthval's 'nagrl.'

[70] GBP 47. "nâth bolai amrt bamnim barikhaigi kambali bhïjaigà pàmnï / tek / gàri padarvâ bandhilai khOm^â, celem damâmmâm bàjilai Qmtà / 1 / kauvà kï dàlï pïpal basai mûsà ke sabad biliyâ nàsai *12 1* cale batàvà thàkï bà£, sovai dukriyâ ^haurai khà^; / 3 / dhûkile kûkar bhûkile cor, kâj-hai dhanïm pukàrai dhor / 4 / ûjar kherâ nagar majhàrï tali gâgri Qpar panihàri / 5 / magrî pari cûlhà dhûmdhâi, povanhârà kau rori khâi / 6 / kâmmini jalai agïthi tapai, bici baisandar tharhar kàmpai / 7 / ek ju radhiyà radhtî âî, bahû bivài sàsû jàï / 8 / gagrî kau pàmnïm kûï âvai,

their knowledge requires participation through the ritual of initiation and the guidance from a guru. Being secret this language is also elitist - only few have mastery over this discourse - and in this sense it is socially powerful. This language, the esoteric discourse of the yogis, displays also a strong experiential quality: this *episteme* is a result of successfully underwent yogic practice; it is not a product of bookish knowledge. Gorakh is very eager to emphasize this distinction. And finally, the purpose of the yogic discourse - especially as exemplified in its more enigmatic moments - is to serve as a sort of symbolic capital: the Naths are displaying their knowledge and attainments in order to represent themselves as powerful adepts, their way of life as attractive to potential recruits, their wisdom as transcending the knowledge of scholars and priests. The social criticism is addressed not only to the pundits but in fact to all whose authority is confined to the doctrinal and denominational boundaries of the medieval North India.

Gorakhnath makes repeated references to the fact that what he talks about is an experiential fact, obtained through the practice of yoga, unattainable through the study of books, however sacred they claim to be. "It can't be read in the *Vedas* or the *sastras, I* In the *kitabs,* the *Koran* or in the books."[71] The spiritual realities he is pointing out are accessed only through the mastery of the occult aspects of the human body. To paraphrase one of his *sabads,* one has to learn the unseen wisdom at 'the summit of the sky' *(sahasrdr cakra),* the occult place where the word *(sabad)* emerges into light.[79] "Everything else is worldly affairs."[73] This being so, Gorakh rarely misses the chance to challenge the authority of scholars: "0 pundit, understand the incomprehensible / And

ulti carca gorakh gavai."

[71] **GBS 6. "vede na sastre katebe na kuramne pustake na bamcya jai."**

[72] **See GBS 4.**

[73] **GBS 6. "dun! sab dandhai lai."**

tell the story that can't be told! / Having met the true guru, bow your head!" And in a similar spirit: "O pundit, enough of learned discussions! / He who does not talk, he is an *avadhiit.*"[75]

I suggest that the rhetoric of the Nath Siddhas is best viewed in the sense of 'symbolic capital.' The notion of the symbolic capital was developed by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and recently applied by Hugh Urban in his study of the Kartabhajas, a Bengali tantric group. Urban suggests that the notion of secrecy - an element of supreme importance in esotericism - should be understood "as a strategy for concealing and revealing information. It is a tactic which functions *to transform certain knowledge into a rare and valuable commodity,* a scarce resource, which in turn enhances the status and prestige - in Bourdieu's terms the 'symbolic capital' - of its possessor."[76] I would like to propose that not only secrecy, but equally so the rhetoric, the discourse of the Nath yogis serves the function of symbolic capital. In fact, the three elements, the secrecy, rhetoric, and power are mutually related and reinforcing. The *jogis* appear the most powerful in those moments when they glorify the fruits of yogic practice in a language that presents itself as a 'rare and valuable commodity,' alluding to the secrets of immortality and the life divine. "Those who accomplish the impossible, who thunder in the [clear] sky, / Who unlock the [state of] *unmani,* / Those who reverse the breath, say reverse things, / Who drink the undrinkable: they are the ones who know *brahman.*"[77]

GBS 222"abûjhi bûjhilai ho panditâ akath kathilai kahàmnï / sis navàmvat satgur milïyà jàgat raimn bihâmnï."

[75] **GBP 38, refrain, "pandit jan jan bàd na hoi anbolyà avadhû soi."**

[76] **Hugh B. Urban, *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12; emphasis added.**

[77] **GBS 90.asâdh sàdhant gagan gàjant, unmani làgant tàlï / ulafcant payant bàrnnïrn, apïv pïvat te brahmagyàmnï."**

ESOTERICISM AS A MODE OF DISCOURSE

The Faivrian model of esotericism does not incorporate language among its four major and two minor characteristics. It is my conviction, however, that the role of language, in addition to the categories of sexuality and power, needs to be given significant emphasis when considering esotericism 'as a mode of thought,' to use Faivre's own phrase. The esoteric thought is generated and exercised through the language that is employed in a particular and special manner, which differs from the everyday usage. The more serious engagement with this issue surpasses the scope of this study, but I feel the need to address it nevertheless, before leaving the subject of the esotericism of speech.

Esotericism cannot be reduced to only the level of speech, but as far as it manifests itself as a discursive phenomenon, its distinction from other modes of speech needs to be acknowledged. If we take *The Sayings of Gorakh* as our contextual focus, we notice that language tends to be hermeneutically opaque. This language is sensitive to the underlying notion of correspondence between various aspects of reality, it is often metaphoric, it makes little sense when taken literally. The way Gorakh uses language to construct the imagery of some of his poems resembles by its very structure something of the reality that is exemplified in the yogic way of life: its process of reversal *(ulta sddhana)* and its going against the grain of what is considered ordinary and normative. The language of *The Sayings of Gorakh,* especially in its performative aspect, functions also as a symbolic capital, the value of which rises in proportion to the element of secrecy displayed.

The esoteric language - one might say, the language as a communicating medium in general - represents a functional parallel to the *imagination and mediation,* considered

in accordance with the Faivrian model of esotericism. Language stands between the reality of the material plane, exemplified by the human body, and the level of spiritual (intangible) reality. The Nath Siddhas, generally speaking, share a view, also common to Kablr and the Sants, according to which the ultimate reality is *nirgun,* 'without [describable] qualities.' Between this ultimate but unutterable realm of unity and the 'hard-core' reality of the material plane, language serves the function of mediation to the same (or similar) degree that esoteric theory assumes imagination to stand as a mediator between the aforesaid two realms. Language is related to the breath, which is also a mediating force, neither completely material, nor completely spiritual. And just as within the realm of imagination the identities are not fixed and rigid, but flexible and interchangeable, so the esoteric language allows for many signifiers to stand for one and same intended signified. This fact carries within, as its curious consequence, an element of social critique:

What is the main underlying principle behind the rhetoric of the Siddhas? What is the reason behind the usage of their metaphors and similes, what is it that justifies the employment of the 'upside-down' language? What do they mean by all of this? The reasons are certainly many, but if one is to be singled out, it could be the following: This world is a metaphor for the Ultimate and there are limitless signifiers but only one signified. *There should be no hierarchical distinctions between signifiers.* The ultimate can be symbolized by the vocabulary of the bazaar equally well as by the vocabulary of philosophy: in either case, what is important is that the signifiers are mutually interchangeable and ultimately disposable. Brahmanical ideology strives to preserve the principles of social stratification of 'conventional' reality and deploys egalitarian

discourse only in the controlled setting of the ritual and in the ideal world of philosophical argumentation. To give just one example, men and women were claimed to be equally feminine in relation to God, but they retain their gendered disparity in everyday life. From the perspective of the Siddhas, however, an ignorant person, that is to say, a person that is ignorant of their secrets, a non-initiate and a non-adept, is deemed inferior whatever his or her social standing might be. And vice versa, those who know the secret, those who control their senses and their sexuality are adepts, whether they are fishermen or kings.

The whole world is a metaphor for the ultimate and there is no hierarchical distinction between various signifiers. No symbol is equal for Reality and only Reality counts, not its representations. "Empty is not populated. Populated is not empty."[78]

With these considerations and speculations, we are entering the world of the Nathist ideology. The next chapter will, accordingly, concentrate on the exploration of mental phenomena, of what I have been referring to as the esotericism of mind.

GBS 1. "basti na sunyam sunyarn na basti."

CHAPTER 4

THE NATH SIDDHAS AND ESOTERICISM OF THE MIND

This very mind is Sakti, this very mind is Siva.
This very mind is the life of the five elements.
The one who controls the mind and remains in what is beyond the mind,
He may speak about the secrets of the three worlds.

Gorakh Bam **(GBS 50)**

At the level of the uppermost *cakra,* the transformation of the *bindu* is complete. The semen returns to its place of origin and turns into the nectar, the *amfi,* while the yogi becomes an adept, a *siddha.* This accomplishment has its reflection in the attainment of gnosis, which is a wisdom that has an experiential character and needs to be distinguished from ordinary intellectual knowledge and erudition. In this chapter, my primary concern will be to address the esoteric aspects of the mental phenomena as understood by the Nath Siddhas and as sung about in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* By the 'mental phenomena' I have in mind a variety of concepts that are related to the issues of ideology, ethics, and the role of mind in the context of the practice of yoga as envisioned by Gorakhnath and his order of yogis. In order to correlate these concepts to the overall thesis of this study, the following needs to be emphasized:

As far as doctrine (ideology, metaphysics) is concerned, it is tenable that what the Ndths are occupied with may meaningfully be conceptualized as esotericism. Their orientation is mostly practical but it nevertheless relies on ideology. This ideology is esoteric not only because of its metaphysical assumptions but also because it values the

roles of teachers and lineages as more important than the doctrinal orthodoxy and a rigid belief system.[1] In other words, the Nath yogis rely primarily on the ritual transmission of knowledge, maintaining at the same time that the essentials of their world-view transcend the narrow boundaries of denominational strictures.

The ideal mental achievement towards which a yogi strives is the condition of the divine knowledge, gnosis. Alternatively, this ideal is expressed as the state of 'no-mind' or what is 'beyond mind' *(unman).* As an element of esotericism, this binds argument both in Arthur Versluis' definition of the category,[3] and in the Faivrian concept of 'transmutation.' A transmuted mind is no-mind.

Ethically, the moral ideal is correlated to the concerns of yoga. As a result, the ethical flaws observed in exoteric, or normative, religions are criticized in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* In addition, Gorakhnath is also critical of those yogis who are involved in practices that are at variance with his vision of yoga. It follows that Gorakh is also a reformer of yoga (as White has also observed). The esoteric character of the yogic ethics of Gorakh is visible from the fact that morality is not thought of in terms of good and bad, or sin and virtue, but in accordance with the overall practical orientation and purpose of the discipline of yoga.

Functionally, the mind in the discipline of yoga has a role that is comparable to what is in the Western esotericism understood as a practice of imagination. We have already come across this proposition in previous chapters. Expressed axiomatically, meditation *is* imagination. The mind engaged in esoteric work is usually called

[1] **Frits Staal, in particular, emphasized this view in several writings.**
[2] **That is to say, we may observe the presence of the 'practice of concordance' (as an esoteric element) in the fact that the Náth yogis move in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and even Muslim circles.**

imagination in the West and meditation in India.[4] The parallelism between these two has been noticed by scholars such as Agehananda Bharati and Mircea Eliade, but the issue has not been treated with adequate conceptual clarity.

I am convinced that in each and all of the above-mentioned elements, the correlation between the principles of esotericism and the yoga of the Nàth Siddhas is demonstrable. The value of this insight lies in the fact that it opens a possibility to the reconceptualization of the nature of yoga, which thus opens door to comparative and cross-cultural investigations. I will devote the rest of this chapter to elaboration of the above made assertions.

IDEOLOGY AND THE 'RELIGION' OF THE NÂTH SIDDHAS

The ideology of the Nàth Siddhas, as exemplified in *The Sayings of Gorakh,* is almost exclusively concerned with the principles of yoga. As Dasgupta, Eliade, and especially White have shown, the *hafha yoga* of Gorakhnâth and his followers is based on the presuppositions of Indian alchemy, or *rasâyana.* The main tenet of alchemy is the belief in the possibility of transmutation, whether it is the transmutation of base metals into gold, or of ordinary human beings into immortal adepts. The principle of transmutation is also a major characteristic of esotericism as defined by Faivre; thus, what the Nàth yogis believe reflects by its nature an esoteric ideological position. As I have already proposed on several occasions, the concept of transmutation has, in the doctrine and practice of the Siddhas, its correlate in the process of reversal, *ulfa sddhana.*

[3] **According to Versluis, the orientation towards the achievement of gnosis is a necessary condition of esotericism. See his article "What is Esoteric?"**

[4] **The Hindi and Sanskrit term for imagination, *kalpana,* does not correspond with the technical meaning that imagination has in Western esotericism. Meditation, *dhyân* (Skt. *dhyâna),* does. So does *bhâvanâ.***

The principle of transmutation is also very similar in its implications to what the Buddhist scholar Ian Harris has called the notion of perfectibility. Perfectibility is interesting because it is at variance with assumptions that are typical of the categories of secularism and religion as they are commonly understood in the West. As Harris explains, "This is because Western systems, both secular and religious, generally fail to accept the notion of perfectibility of man to the extent that it is employed in the East."[5] Let us, in this context, just recall the fact that deification, becoming 'a second Siva,' is the ultimate goal of the Nath yogis. It thus appears meaningful to treat them as esoteric phenomenon, where the perfectibility or transmutation is an assumed element of theory and a desired goal of practice.

Perfectibility, or to use a stronger word, deification is also a process and achievement that is related to power. To change one's mortal status and become a 'second Siva,' means, as already argued, to appropriate and share in the nature of the Great Lord, who possesses power as one of his essential prerogatives. Gorakhnath, for example, describes an ideal yogi as the one who transcends the boundaries imposed by elements that comprise the physical world: "He cannot be hidden in the sky, / He cannot burn in fire; the wind can't push him in the air. / The weight of the earth can't break him, he cannot sink in the water."[6] That the Nath Siddhas are viewed as powerful persons is common knowledge. I would like to emphasize, however, that the orientation towards power understood as the sacred is a defining characteristic of magic as an esoteric

[5] **Ian Harris,** *The Continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogacara in Indian Mahayana Buddhism* **(Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 153. Qtd. in King,** *Orientalism and Religion,* **247, n. 52. King critically refers to the ideological attitudes inherent in Kantian and post-Enlightenment philosophical traditions, which were also influential in the construction of the 'scientific study of religion,' as the 'epistemologies of limitation.' See ibid., 179.**

[6] **GBS 24. "gagane na gopant teje na sokhant pavane na pelant baT / yahl bhare na bhajant udake na dubant."**

discipline. In that sense also, the ideology of the *jogis* is in general agreement with the main doctrinal presuppositions of esotericism.

Gurus, Lineages, and Devotion

In his masterful study *Orientalism and Religion,* Richard King emphasizes the incompatibility between the category of religion as shaped by Judeo-Christian presuppositions and the spiritual traditions of other cultures that do not share those assumptions. According to King, the monotheistic religions of the West are rooted in a paradigm that is marked by the insistence on theistic belief, exclusivity, and dualism between this and the transcendental divine world.[7] It is evident that this model of religion does not correspond to the ideological assumptions of the Nâth yogis. Instead of the supremacy of a theistic belief, they emphasize the indispensability of practice, *sadhana.* The *jogis* are not exclusive but are, quite to the contrary, well known for mingling with Islamic esoteric groups. They also have close ties with Buddhist tantric groups, such as *siddhâcàryas* and Nepalese Buddhist traditions. The two sons of Matsyendranâth are the legendary founders of the two Jain sects. In recent times, the Nâth Siddhas have even collaborated with some Western occult figures.[8] Instead of the dualism between this world and the divine world, they teach the doctrine of sameness, *samaras.* The world of the gods is not thought to be transcendental, but is in fact believed to be internally present within the subtle body of the yogi. Based on these elements, it is more meaningful to

[7] **King,** *Orientalism and Religion,* **37.**

[8] **One of them was a British occultist known under the Hindu name Dadaji. "Dadaji lived in India from 1953 until his death in 1991. Dadaji has found the horse's mouth and a genuine stream of magical tantra. This he made available to western adepts willing to accept initiation. Some of this material was published in a book entitled** *Tantra Magick* **(Mandrake of Oxford 1990) which has since been republished in India." Katon Shu'al,** *Sexual Magick* **(Oxford: Mandrake of Oxford, 1995).**

classify the Naths as an esoteric tradition, than as a religion (if defined and understood as above).

Frits Staal has also been emphatic, on numerous occasions, in the insistence that religion is not a suitable category to be applied to Asian spiritual traditions. His suggestion is that the term 'religion' should be used only in reference to Western monotheistic traditions. "In most parts of Asia, such religions do not exist, but scholars, laymen, and Western converts persist in trying to find them," writes Staal. "What counts instead are ancestors and teachers - hence lineages, traditions, affiliations, cults, eligibility, and initiation - concepts with ritual, rather than truth-functional overtones."[9] It hardly needs mentioning that teachers, lineages, cults, eligibility and initiations are of vital importance for the Nath yogis, as these are directly related to what Faivre calls transmission, which is an element that is characteristic of esoteric traditions.

That gurus and lineages are important in the lifestyle of the *jogis* is a well-known fact, although it is rarely brought into comparative correlation with the general features of esotericism. This correlation is, however, very important for it helps us to theorize about the Naths from a fresh perspective. Based on that perspective, and seen in combination with other elements of esotericism, it seems clear that the veneration of gurus in this style of yoga should be seen as an act of devotion. The human guru is in fact only a symbol of the inner teacher that is fundamentally accessed through the yogic (imaginal!) work on *cakras.* There is a line of correspondence that connects the human teacher with the inner,

[9] **Staal,** *Ritual and Mantras,* **393. In his essay on "The Himalayas and the Fall of Religion," Staal asserts that "neither language nor religion are natural and helpful categories of thought in the study and understanding of the Vedas, Buddhism, and Tantrism. Language is, of course, a necessary tool required to study and understand linguistic manifestations of the three traditions. Religion, on the other hand, has caused issues to be obscured. Language and religion are categories that divide into separate groups that are clearly similar and closely related, and group together things that have nothing to do with each other. In an attempt at conceptual clarification, the use of such categories, therefore, evinces bad logic" (46).**

true guru, who is again correlated through the line of correspondence with the ultimate master of yoga, the great god Siva.

The following *sabad* from *The Sayings of Gorakh* combines two elements relevant for the present discussion: the importance of the mind in the practice of yoga, and the role of the guru as a helper in transcending the mind. The reader will notice a motif familiar from KabTr, the metaphor of an arrow that stands for wisdom, which destroys metaphysical obstacles. The context makes it clear that the guru in question is in fact an inner, esoteric teacher. Gorakh says, "He whose mind has devoured / Both gods and demons / Should [also] kill the mind, / By taking hold of the arrow of guru's wisdom."[10] I will postpone an elaboration of the practice of going beyond the mind for a later section of this chapter. Here, I want to emphasize the implication contained in this *sabad* that the guru and his wisdom transcend the role and importance of gods *(devas),* who are otherwise also delegated a position inferior to the mind. The mind is able to do away with, to 'devour' the gods and demons, but the wisdom of the guru transcends even the mind. It follows that the attainment of 'no-mind' *(unman)* depends on the grace of the guru. That the ultimate achievement depends on the grace of the guru is a strong indicator that the relationship between a disciple and the teacher rests on the relationship of devotion, where grace is a crucial element.

The devotional relationship between disciple and teacher is also implied and reconfirmed in another *sabad* where Gorakh again speaks of mystical experience as being contingent on the guru's grace: "A light is shining without fire. / I saw it trough the guru's grace."[11] Similarly, in one of the *pads,* there is a description of the ludic nature

[10] **GBS 229. "jini man grase dev dan / so man marile gahi guru gyamn bamn."**
[11] **GBS 239. "bini baisandar joti balat hai guru prasade dlthT."**

inherent in the access to higher *cakras,* which is again declared dependent on the exercise of the teacher's grace: "Gorakh plays between Ganga and Yamuna / Due to the grace of the guru Machindra."[12] The rivers Ganga and Yamuna, as is well known, metaphorically refer to the inner channels of energy, *i pa* and *píngala;* the place between them is the famous *trikufi sangam,* the confluence of the three 'rivers.' The third river is SarasvatI, which metaphorically refers to the main inner channel, the *susumpa,* that is situated within the spinal column. The place where these three inner rivers meet is the *ájña cakra,* one of the most important centers of energy in the body, often referred to as the 'third eye' and generally associated with the attainment of wisdom. These verses are thus a fine example of the 'confluence' of the relevant motifs (the inner 'geography,' relevance of the teacher, the occult wisdom, and a coded rhetoric) that connect this style of yoga with the principles of esotericism.

The most striking illustration of the devotional attitude inherent in the relationship between teacher and pupil in the discipline of yoga is evident in the following *pad.* What we have here is an example of a 'bridal mysticism' that would be completely out of place if the yoga of the Náths were really without the element of devotion, as is so often asserted. After he has referred to the wisdom of his guru as a water-gourd that helps him extinguish his greed, Gorakh continues: "In this way, the true guru has married me, / A delicate young maiden. / SrT Gorakh spoke, through Machindra's grace, / The fear of *maya* is gone."[13] The language is of course metaphorical, 'marriage' being an expression

[12] **GBP 18: 5. "gang jamun bic khelai gorakh, guru machnidra prasádam."**
[13] **GBP 16:5. "en satguri amhe paranambya, abla bal kuvámvrí / machindra prasad srl gorakh bolyá, maya nam bhau tan." In his commentary on this *pad,* Barthwal implies that the guru marries Gorakh to *maya,* making him thus her master whom she has to obey. See *Gorakh Banl,* 106. Shukdev Singh was, however, adamant that, grammatically, 'abla bal kuvámvn' (a delicate young maiden) qualifies 'amhe,' the first person pronoun. Also, the idea is that an ordinary person is married to a woman, and thus illusion (in the**

of the inner attitude of dedication to the guru and his wisdom, but the metaphor would be impossible if there were not an underlying assumption of devotion and love between the pupil and the teacher.

Devotional character of the Nath Siddhas' approach to yoga has also recently been argued by Vijay Mishra in his study *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime.*[14] According to him, the project of the Naths 'marks a decisive shift in the ideology of bhakti as it returns to Yoga's original emphasis on the corporeal."[15] The body is thus approached as the site of metaphysical presence and as the focus of religious desire, what Mishra designates as the 'sublime.'[16] In the context of the conceptual approach that I have been suggesting throughout this study, Mishra's 'sublime' body is in fact the esoteric subtle body, which serves as a locus of divine presence and, ultimately, omnipotence. From another angle, the 'sublime' as the focus of devotional attention manifests in the guise of powers (the *siddhis)* that the yogis are striving to achieve and that are simultaneously the marks of the Great Lord Himself.[17]

In the preceding section, my intention was to emphasize several elements that are at the same time also mutually interconnected. By stressing the importance of the guru in the teachings of Gorakhnath, I wanted to show that his ideology is meaningfully qualified as esotericism, where the transmission of knowledge through initiation and teachers is a

sexist rhetoric of the Siddhas, *mayd* **is symbolized by woman), while the yogi is 'married' to a teacher, and thus free from illusion. Shukdev Singh, oral communication, 28 February 2003, Varanasi, India.**

[14] **Vijay Mishra,** *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1998). In particular, see the chapter "Temples of Fire" (129-61), and especially the discussion on pages 142-8.**

[15] **Ibid., 143.**

[16] **Ibid., 165.**

[17] **1 should also add that the devotional character of the Naths is also implicitly acknowledged by the incorporation of the** *sabads* **and** *pads* **from the** *Gorakh Bdrii* **in the anthology** *Devotional Hindi Literature: A Critical Edition of Panc-vinior Five Works of Dadu, Kabir, Namdev, Raidds, Hardds with the Hindi Songs of Gorakhnath and Sundardds and a Complete Word-index, 2* **vols, eds. Winand M. Callewaert and Bart Op de Beeck (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991).**

sine qua non. I also wanted to demonstrate that the guru is often understood in the sense of an inner teacher, who may be experienced through the yogic work on the subtle body and its centres of occult energy.[18] This fact explains that the yogi's concentration on *cakras* and *naps* of the subtle body often has as its intended goal precisely the encounter with the inner teacher, who helps the disciple to accomplish major spiritual feats. According to the vocabulary of esotericism, this is possible because there is a correspondence between the body and its subtle aspect that is permeated by metaphysical entities. One of them is the 'true guru,' the veneration of whom is often hidden from the sight, because he is not externally objectified. The true guru bestows grace on the pupil and the relationship between them is fundamentally devotional. In conclusion, the yogic ideology is an esoteric one, and esotericism helps us understand the less obvious devotional side of this ideology.

The Concept of God

It is customarily asserted that the Nath yogis are Saivites. This attribution seems perfectly natural: Siva is the Lord of yoga and he is the Original Master *(adindth)* of the Nath lineage. Gorakhnath is also often understood to be a second Siva, and every yogi, at least in theory, is attempting to achieve the same status. It appears that there is nothing more natural than to confirm the above attribution, and since the Saivites are Hindus, it follows that the Naths are also just another group within Hinduism. And while this may be so, especially in recent times since the Western construct of 'Hinduism' has taken root as a

[18] In this context, the following statements by Charlotte Vaudeville seem particularly appropriate: "The exaltation of the guru as a manifestation of the supreme Reality probably explains the remarkable silence maintained by the Siddhas and the Nath-panthTs, as well as by Kablr and the old Sant poets, on their human gurus, if indeed they had any. The role of the human guru as an external teacher and guide tends to be

self-identifying category in India, there are many indicators that this was not the original, or the only possible, sense of yogic identity. Scholars have noticed that the Naths have their own ideology, even their own 'religion.' Before tackling that issue, let us first investigate, concentrating again on *The Sayings of Gorakh,* the alternative concept of god in the doctrine of the Siddhas.

On several occasions, Gorakhnath refers to the ultimate theistic concept by the term *niranjan*.[19] The literate meaning of the term is 'without blemish,' although it may also be taken to mean 'without embellishment.' The word *anjan* refers to a lampblack, which is applied as a cosmetic ornament to the eyes and eyelashes;[20] *niranjan* would then designate the lack of ornaments or decoration. In this sense, the meaning of the term *niranjan* is similar to the concept of *nirgun,* which refers to the 'formless god' or the 'god without (describable) qualities.' In North India, the *nirgun* conception of god is usually associated with the theological ideas of Kablr and the devotional groups known as the Sants.[21] The relationship between the *jogis* on the one hand, and Kablr and other *nirgun bhaktas* such as Sants on the other, is complex and inconsistently formulated and maintained. In general, it is possible to make a simplified assertion that the miracles and other eccentrics of yoga are rejected, while certain yogic concepts and technical vocabulary seem to have permeated the rhetoric of the Sants. We also know that at least some of the latter preserved and included into their repertoire a number of yogic songs.[22]

obliterated as he only makes manifest the true nature of Guruhood, which is expressed in the divine *Sabda,* participating of the transcendent nature of the Satguru." ***Weaver Named Kabir,*** **98.**

[19] **See an interesting discussion on the concept of *niranjan* in Dasgupta, *Obscure Cults,* 326-8, where the Indian scholar relates this deity to Vedic Prajapati and Hiranya-garbha.**

[20] **McGregor, *Hindi-English Dictionary,* s.v. "anjan."**

[21] **On Sants, see *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India,* eds. Karine Schomer and W. H. McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).**

[22] **See, for example, Winand M. Callewaert and Peter G. Friedlander, *The Life and Works of Raidas* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1992), esp. 51-80. The teaching of the Nath Siddhas was generally met with the approval**

The reason I mention the above lies in the following: it is very problematic to include the Sants under the umbrella of 'Hinduism' because of their critical attitude to the normative tradition. By extension, it follows that - to the degree that the *jogis* are comparable to the Sants - the inclusion of the Naths within Hinduism is equally problematic and artificial.

I would like to propose two things in this connection. First, the concept of the *nirañjan* is esoteric, for a number of reasons, but mostly because the god that is referred to by this title is mysterious and inaccessible, unless it is experienced within, through the discipline of yoga. And second, this god is approached devotionally, the form of this devotion being yoga. I will now provide a substance to these two proposals.

Nirañjan is without describable qualities; however, it may be experienced within. One *sabad* addresses the paradox inherent in the metaphysical idea of this order. Gorakh sings that "*Nirañjan* is without branch and without root, / All pervading, neither subtle nor gross."[23] This invisible and ineffable but all pervading god manifests itself through the way of life of an enlightened yogi: the yogi thus becomes an embodiment and his or her actions the expression of the inner deity. This is made explicit in the following verses from *The Sayings of Gorakh:* "The [real] householder is the one who knows his body. / He keeps inside what goes outside. / Always the same towards everything, he cuts through illusion. / Such a householder should be called the form of *nirañjan.*"[24] I would like to emphasize that to become 'the form of the formless,' the requirement is to turn inside and become familiar with the body in its, presumably, occult aspects. It follows

by the Dadupanthls and the followers of Raidas; KabTr was ambivalent; Nanak and Sikhs were critical and rejecting.

[23] GBS 111. "sol niranjan dal na mul, sab byaplk sukham na asthul."

[24] GBS 44. "gharbarl so ghar kTjanai / bahari jata bhTtari anai / sarab nirantari katai maya / so gharbarl kahie niranjan kT kaya."

that *niranjan* is both esoterically present within the body of the yogi, and that esoteric practice or yoga is the method for its realization.

In one of the *sabads,* Gorakhnath refers to the mind as the mother, calling the *niranjan* the father.[25] Again, the supremacy of the *niranjan* over the mind *(manas)* is confirmed, based on the fact that in the patriarchal society the role of the father surpasses the role of the mother. More important is the inherent relationship of devotion, established by calling the god one's father. The most explicit in this context is the refrain of a *pad* where Gorakh weaves in his poetical statement the attitude of devotion to a god that is both formless and secret, inaccessible to those who follow the norms of exoteric worship: "I am your devotee, / Oh unmade god! / Everybody [else] serves the made-up image. / They don't know your secret."[26] This god is, moreover, experienced as present within the subtle body of the yogi, as is evident from the following verses: *"Niranjan* dwells in the tenth door, beyond mind *[unman] I* Contained in the reversed *sabad."*[27] Here we have a cluster of esoteric elements: the tenth door *(brahmarandhra),* no-mind *(unman),* the *sabad,* the reversal *(ulapi). Niranjan* is within, accessed in the subtle body through the yogic process of reversal, esoterically correspondent to the *sabad.*[28]

The necessary conclusion is that the concept of god is inseparable from the practical presuppositions of the discipline of yoga. The god of the Nath Siddhas is conceptualized through a set of ideas that are based on the practice of yoga, which is just another way of saying that their spiritual doctrine is esoteric, if yoga is understood as an esoteric discipline . The vision of this god is grand: *"Niranjan* is the god, and no other. /

[25] **GBS 202.**

[26] **GBP 58: refrain, "tujhi pari van ho anagharlya deva / ghap murati kum sab koT sevai, tahi na jamnai bheva."**

[27] **GBP 11:4. "dasvaim dvar niranjan unman basa, sabadaim ulati samamnam."**

His age is limitless, / His end is nowhere to be found." The way of devotion that leads to the god understood in such manner is yoga. Yoga is esotericism and yoga is devotion. It appears that, as far as the nature of the religious quest of the Nath Siddhas is concerned, esotericism as a conceptual model represent a meaningful category.

'Nathism' as an Esoteric vs. Exoteric Religious Category

In the introductory chapter, I have briefly mentioned that several scholars suggested classifying the 'Nathism' as a distinct religion. For example, Daniel Gold and Ann Grodzins Gold have written that, "'Nathism' has been recognized by some as a separate strand in Indian popular religion, representing, perhaps, an ancient religious tradition alongside Vaishnavism and Shaivism."[30] A similar idea has been put forward by Charlotte Vaudeville. According to the French scholar, "As a religion, Nathism hardly comes within the pale of Hinduism and there appears to be some truth in the opinion held by some that it is a distinct religion. Mohan Singh has called it 'Shabadism' since the Sabda itself is held as the key to liberation."[31] David Gordon White has also speculated on the distinct nature of the phenomenon of the Nath yogis, set apart, according to him, from devotional, tantric, and Islamic trends that came to dominate Indian medieval spiritual traditions.

The potential separate nature of 'Nathism' may be interrogated on several levels. I suggest paying attention to two issues when searching for the clues in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* On the implicit level, many of the poems are critical of the formal religion,

[28] **See also GBP 19: 5, which carries a similar message.**

[29] **GBP 62. "dev niranjan aur no koi / anat kala jakai par na pavai."**

[30] **Gold and Gold, "Fate of the Householder Nath," 115.**

advancing the view that real religious observances are those performed inwardly, by paying attention to the spirit instead of the letter of the precepts. The poems of this type are numerous. On fewer occasions, the path of yoga is explicitly distinguished from the religion of the Hindus and Muslims. The conclusion is that the Naths are the followers of an 'interior religion,' an expression used by Vaudeville to designate spirituality of KabTr.[33] In other words, it is justifiable to classify them as an 'esoteric current,' to use Faivrian phrase.

There is a statement in one of the *sabads,* according to which the Naths are Hindus by birth, Muslims[34] by wisdom, and yogis by 'burning.'[35] The metaphor of 'burning' is, as previously explained, a reference to the practice of yoga, which serves the function of transmuting the yogi into a 'cooked,' that is to say, accomplished adept. More important for the present discussion is the assumed line of demarcation between the yoga of the Siddhas on the one hand, and the path of Hindus and Muslims on the other. The distinction is made even more strongly in the following verses, which also make explicit that what the yogis follow is the internal religion. Gorakh says, "A Hindu worship in the temple, / A Muslim in the mosque. / A yogi worships the supreme / Where there is neither temple nor mosque."[36]

[31] **Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **99. Vaudeville is referencing Mohan Singh,** *Kabir: His Biography* **(Lahore, 1934), 68.**

[32] **See White, "Wonders of Sri Mastnath," 401-2.**

[33] **Vaudeville, "Kabir and Interior Religion." The gist of Vaudeville's argument lies in the following statement: "Throughout KabTr's work the accent is on interiorization: man ought to turn his attention away from the exterior world, from all sensible forms, in order to withdraw into the innermost depths of his conscience (undoubtedly analogous to the** *sirr* **of the Sufis) where God dwells " (196).**

[34] **Or, according to Barthwal's gloss, a Muslim sage or** *plr,* **if 'pari' in the text is emended to 'plr.' See** *Gorakh Bam,* **6.**

[35] **GBS 14. "utpati hindu jaranam jog! akali pari musalmamnlm."**

[36] **GBS 68. "hindu dhyavai dehura musalman maslt / jogl dhyavai parampad jaham dehura na maslt."**

The distinct nature of yoga as practiced by the Nath Siddhas is also clearly evident in those poems where Gorakhnath's stature is juxtaposed against and above the major gods of the Hindu pantheon. This would be hardly possible if Gorakh considered himself a member of the normative religion. From the perspective of the *jogis,* these gods are victims to the same power of unconquered sexuality that binds human beings to the eternally recurrent realm of false reality that is *samsdr.* For example, there is a set of three consecutive *sabads*[37] that have a common subject matter: the lust, personified by the god Kam, that has subjugated both 'the gods and men.' "The lust has entered the god Brahma / And Indra has got a thousand vaginas."[38] It has overpowered '88.000 great sages,'[39] and all the ten avatars of the god Visnu.[40] Significantly, it is claimed that Kam has conquered even the god Siva, which represents a stark reversal of the traditional version of the story, according to which Siva famously burns the god of lust to ashes: "This god of lust has danced upon Siva, / The great god who originated dance."[41] The only one who was able to restrain lust was Gorakh, who did so following the principles of *hatha yoga* related to the preservation of the semen. "The invincible lust was conquered by the ascetic Gorakhnath / Who has preserved the downward flowing *[bindu].*"[42]

Very similar to the above is a *pad* that uses the compound metaphor of the serpent, which serves as a metaphor for woman, who allegorically represents lust. The lust has conquered the three worlds, which Gorakh saw as 'bitten by the snake.'[43] "The

[37] **GBS 198-200.**
[38] **GBS 198. "brahma devata kandrap byapya / yandra sahamsra bhag pal." Kandrap or Kandarp is an alternative name for the god Kam.**
[39] **GBS 199.**
[40] **GBS 200.**
[41] **GBS 199. "yamn kandrap Tsvar mahadev natarambh nacaya."**
[42] **GBS 200. "asadhi kandrap jatl gorakhnath sadhya / jani nljhar jharanta rakhya."**
[43] **GBP 45: refrain, "tribhuvan dastl gorakhnath dlthl."**

snake says, / 'I am a powerful woman. / I have deluded Brahma / Visiju and Siva."[44] There is an indication that death is powerless over the one who has killed the snake.[45] A sort of a duel ensues; the snake is trying to run away chased by Gorakh, who rushes after her 'like a wind,' chanting the *gauri* mantra. The *pad* ends on a note of victory: "Adinath's grandson, / Machindra's son, / Gorakh *avadhüt* / Has killed the snake."[46] It appears evident that the path of yoga is set apart from normative religion and its pantheon of gods, who are helpless to achieve what for the yogis is a fundamental requirement: the control of sexuality based on the control of semen. It is significant that even Siva, who is supposed to be the tutelary god of the Nath Siddhas, belongs to the category of deities deluded by the lust. In this sense, yogic self-identity is distinct: they belong to the (esoteric) path of yoga, which they consider superior to other spiritual options.

The yogic distinction is also implicitly assumed in numerous poems from *The Sayings of Gorakh* that stress the importance and necessity of following the inner disposition, the spirit of religious observances. We are consequently told that to abstain from lust, anger, and selfishness is equal to going to holy places;[47] the real householder is

AG

the one who knows his body; and the real renouncer is the one who listens the unstruck sound and whose mind remains in the *unman.*[49] Occasionally, the contrast between exoteric and esoteric approach is couched in Islamic vocabulary, as in the *sabad,* which teaches that the real dervish is the one who knows the way in (i.e. inner way) and who is constantly mindful.[50] Gorakh also makes it clear that he travels alone because all that he

[44] GBP 45: 2. "srpanl kahai maim ablá baliya / baha bisn mahádev chaliya."
[45] GBP 45:1.
[46] GBP 45: 4. "ádináth nátT machindra náth puta / srpanim marilai gorakh avadhüta."
[47] GBS 29.
[48] GBS 44-5.
[49] GBS 103.
[50] GBS 182.

needs is internally present: the real guru is wisdom; heart is the disciple, and mind is the friend.[51]

It follows from the above that the Nath Siddhas translate external religious observances into their internal counterparts in a manner that is similar, to invoke a classic example, to the *upani$adic* internalization of Vedic sacrificial ritual. This gesture is by its nature esoteric: its basic assumption - whether explicitly stated or not - is that the human *microcosm* corresponds to the outer *macrocosm.* All that is metaphysically important is present within the body and mind of the human agent. Even more importantly, the esoteric distinction is to emphasize the supremacy of the internal practice over the outwardly performed ritual. The latter can be done superficially and absent-mindedly, while the esoteric practice presupposes concentration and imaginative engagement. For that reason, Gorakh advises that "The journey to the temples is a journey in vain. / Journeying to the *tirthas,* only water is found." This criticism is juxtaposed with the positive statement that "The journey with the ascetics is a fruitful journey, / Where immortal words are spoken."

The ideological principle of yogic internalization advocates a mode of practice that is based on correspondences. Again, the human body is all that is essentially required. As Gorakhnath says, "The body is a robe, and the mind is the yogi."[53] The most explicit and consistent example of this attitude is evident in the following *sabad* where the whole paraphernalia of yogic practice is completely internalized. The text is as follows, "The mind is the yogi and the body is the monastery; the five elements are the

[51] **GBS 189.**
[52] **GBS 97. "deval jatra sumni jatra, fTrath jatra pamnim / atlt jatra suphal jatra bolai amrt bamnlm."**
[53] **GBP 10: 5. "kaya kantha, man jogota."**

robe. / Forgiveness is sitting in the six postures. / Wisdom is the ascetic seat and good reason the wooden slippers. / Thinking is the stick."[54]

It follows, on the basis of the above, that the Nath Siddhas are engaged in an 'interior religion,' to use again Vaudeville's phrase. Occasionally, they juxtapose their spiritual path over and against the normative standards of Hindu and Muslim denominations. More often, they emphasize the need to approach religious observances by paying attention to the inner meaning of spiritual practices, irrespective of denominational particularities. The message of the poetry of *The Sayings of Gorakh* appears to be that one has to turn inward and make cognizance of one's own body and mind, presumably in their occult aspects. Whether this constitutes a distinct religious identity is a moot point. What is important is that there is a general line of agreement between the attitude of the Nath Siddhas and the ideological presuppositions of esotericism 'as a mode of thought.' In that sense, esotericism rather than religion seems to provide an appropriate model to conceptualize yoga of Gorakhnath and his followers.

THE CONCEPT OF *UNMAN:* THE GNOSIS OF 'NO-MIND'

The successful completion of yogic *sddhana* renders the yogi a gnostic, *vijnani.*[55] It is paradigmatic that this knowledge or gnosis acquired through yoga stands in sharp contrast to the exoteric knowledge acquired through the study of books. Intellectuals, pundits, who base their authority on the latter are a constant target of criticism in *The*

GBS 48. "manvarn jog! kaya madh! / pane tatt le kantha gadhT. / ksima sadasan gyan adharT / sumati pavarl dand bicarl." (Original's 'gaya' is emended into 'kaya.')

[55] In modern Hindi, the term 'vijnani' denotes a 'scientist.' But this meaning is hardly commensurable with medieval Hindi 'binamnT.' Contextually, 'gnostic' seems a best choice and I have adopted it throughout.

Sayings of Gorakh. "O pundit, enough of the learned discussions!" is a typical elocution in this context. *Jogis* are discouraged from associating with scholars: "O *avadhut,* do not sit in an assembly of fools! / Do not engage in discussions with pundits!"[57] There is no place for doubt on this issue: Gorakhnath views exoteric knowledge in negative terms. He considers it misplaced knowledge, focussing on what is inconsequential. "You are destroying what is alive / To worship what is dead," Gorakh accuses the pundits in language suggestive of KabTr. "You bathe in *tlrth* after *firth. I* Washing the outside, how will you reach the inside?"[58]

Does it then follow from the above that Gorakh is thoroughly opposed to the pursuit of knowledge? Not entirely.[59] It is evident from the allusions in *The Sayings of Gorakh* that the final achievement of yoga entails a way of knowing, a kind of gnosis. We read, for example, that "Siva dwells in twelve temples; the chief amongst them is the knowledge of *brahman."*[60] The return of the *bindu* to the highest *cakra* is also a 'gnostic event.' The wisdom lies in the experience of one's own self, *dtman.* There is thus a direct link between the return of the *bindu* to the highest *cakra,* the obtainment of the elixir, and the experience of gnosis. Immortality is not only related to the drinking of the nectar, it is also a consequence of self-discovery. "Those who have experience of their self *(dtman)* do not die."[61]

GBP 38: refrain, "pandit jan jan bad na hoi."

[57] **GBS 121. "murikh sabha na baisiba avadhu pandit sau na kariba badam."**

[58] **GBP 37: 2-3. "sarjTv teriya nirjTv! pfljila." "tlrthi tlrthi snarnn karlla, bahar dhoye kaimsaim bhTtari bhedlla."**

[59] **In the** *Gorakhnath Caritr,* **14-15, after testing Gorakh's devotion to him as a teacher, Matsyendra "gave him instruction in all the Vedas and** *sastras* **and made him a complete scholar."**

[60] *Gorakh Barii, Park; Mdtra, 2.* **"dvadas mandir siv thamn / tehu uttam brahma gyamn."**

[61] *Gorakh Banl, Pandrah Tithi,* **1. "atam parcai marai na koi." Cf.** *Gorakh Bam, Sapt Bar-Navgrah,* **"atma parcai marai na koi."**

As might be expected, the content of this experience is couched in the rhetoric that is permeated with an unmistakable esoteric flavour. "At the summit of the sky, the *sabad* emerges into light. / There, [the yogi] comes to know the Invisible Gnostic."[62] The 'invisible one' or *alakh* is another typical yogic designation for the highest god and in that sense it is an alternative expression for *nirañjan.* In this *sabad,* this god is interestingly enough qualified as the 'knower' or, as I prefer to translate it, as the 'gnostic' *Alakh* is imperceptible for ordinary persons, but at the level of the *sahasrdr cakra* ('the summit of the sky') it yields itself to the perception of a yogi in an orgasmic gush of interpenetrating photic, linguistic, and epistemological manifestations that are characteristic for that level of reality. To have this experience, to perceive the invisible god of gnosis, means to have a gnostic experience. This is an esoteric wisdom, as much as gnosis is an esoteric goal, according to Arthur Versluis.

The wisdom that is the fruit of yoga comes from experience, *paricay.* According to Charlotte Vaudeville, "Kablr and the other Sants undoubtedly inherited from Nathism their claim to derive spiritual awareness not from a particular guru, but from direct experience … conceived as the hearing of the mysterious Word … spoken in the depth of the soul by the *Satguru."*[63] The yogic distinction lies in the insistence that only practice, *sadhana,* leads to that experience. In that respect, they are in agreement with the spirit of occultism, which also emphasizes a practical orientation. As Gorakhnath reminds his *jogis,* "There is no book above meditation." A purely intellectual approach to the 'spiritual awareness' is rejected. "Sitting in the posture, stopping the breath, / All the

[62] **GBS 4. "gagani sikhar mahi sabad prakásyá / tahám büjhai alakh binámnim." Alternatively, the second verse could be understood in the sense that one should acquire the 'imperceptible wisdom in the form of gnostic knowledge,' which is the way Barthwal understand this** *sabad.* **See** *Gorakh Bam,* **3.**
[63] **Vaudeville,** *Weaver Named Kabir,* **92.**

functions of duality cease. / Gorakhnâth says, Thinking about *âtman* l Is like watching the Moon in the water."[64] In addition, contrary to Vaudeville's assertion, Gorakh maintains that initiation received from a guru *is* conducive towards this goal. "The knowledge of the self *[âtman]* is experienced in [or, from] guru's mouth."[65] This is another element that connects yogic *sàdhana* to the overall trend of esotericism, the secrets of which are regularly transmitted through initiations.

The particular quality of yogic wisdom is very often described by the designation of 'no-mind,' *unman.* Alternatively, this may be understood to mean, 'beyond mind.' I would like to correlate this concept with the implied notion of transmutation: the ordinary mind is perceived as limited and limiting, and it needs to be transcended, through the process of reversal *(ulfa sddhand).* That the fluctuations of the mind are integral to the experience of false reality, *saipsdr,* is a leitmotif of Indian spiritual traditions. Gorakhnâth addresses this issue in a very strong langauge: "O man, you should kill the mind, the enemy! / It has devoured the whole world, / The gods and the demons. / This mind should be killed / By seizing the arrow of guru's wisdom."[66]

The famous definition of yoga by Patanjali declares that the essence of this discipline lies in the cessation of the whirling of the mind.[67] Gorakhnâth expresses this idea by stating that "There is no illness such as unsteady mind." He therefore suggests the transcendence and reversal of the mind into the state of *unman,* which is a preferable

[64] **GBS 82. "âsan baisibâ pavan nirodhibâ, thâmn-mâmn sab dhandhâ / badant gorakhnâth âtmâm vicârant. jyûm jal dîsai candâ."**
[65] **GBS 38. "âpâ parcai guru mukhi cïmnh."**
[66] **GBP 32: 2, 3. "mâribâ re narâ man drohï ... / sab jag gràsiyà dev dânam, so man mâribâ re gahi guru gyâmn bârnn."**
[67] **"yogaécittavrttinirodhah." Râma Prasâda translates this as "Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications."** ***Pâtanjali's Yoga Sûtras: With the Commentary ofVyasa and the gloss of Vâchaspati Misra,*** **trans. Râma Prasâda (Allahabad: Panini Office, 1912), 5.**
[68] ***Gorakh Bânï, Sist Purân.*** **"cit caftcal uparânti rog nahlm."**

mental condition: "They are truly wise whose mind dwells in the *unmani."* The ordinary mind, in its 'exoteric' condition is deluding; in its reversed state, through which it becomes 'no-mind,' it is wisdom.

The disciplined mind, concentrated through the practice of yoga, gone beyond its natural condition so that it has become no-mind, has its parallel achievement in the production of the elixir, the *amrt.* The convergence of these motifs, the mutual reinforcement of mental concentration and the acquisition of the subtle nectar, is indicated in the following verses: "When the concentration[70] is broken, how can the nectar flow? / When [the mind is] fixed in the *unmani,* [the flow of the nectar] is stable. / When [the mind is] fixed in the *unmani,* there is bliss."[71] The similar idea is expressed in the verses, which declare that "Having drunk the stream of flowing nectar, / The mind becomes settled."[72]

The mind is also related to the breath. Mutual correspondence between the two lies at the foundation of the yogic technique of breathing, *prânâyam:* the regime of breathing is supposed to effect the state of mind. Again, it is paradigmatic to the general trend of yoga that the junction of mind and breath has as its desired goal the transcendence of both. Gorakh says, "I will tie the mind with the breath and I will tie the breath with the mind. / Then I will speak powerfully. / I will make the mind into my disciple, I will push out the breath. / There, where the mind and breath cannot go, I will

GBS 114. "sati te surivam unmani man maim bas."

[70] **Litearally, 'thread' or 'string,' but contextually discipline, concentration. Barthwal glosses 'dorl' as yogic 'samadhi.' See** *Gorakh Bam,* **45.**

[71] **GBS 128. " tut! dorl ras kas bahai / unmani laga asthir rahai / unmani laga hoi anand."**

[72] **GBS 67. "nTjhar jharnaim ammrt pTya yum man huva thlram."**

remain absorbed." Yogic practice implies the control over mind ('I will make mind my disciple') as much as yogic identity assumes the transcendence of this same mind.

In conclusion, Gorakhnath is critical of the intellectuals whose authority is not based on the personal experience of the transcendental wisdom acquired through the practice of yoga. In accordance with the general trend of Indian spiritual traditions, he sees the ordinary, 'exoteric' mentality as limiting and deluding. The mind, in its 'natural' state, is an enemy. In contradistinction to this, Gorakh advocates the ideal of the no-mind, which is accessible through the yogic practice of reversal. In his approach to the phenomenon of the mind, Gorakhnath is in essential agreement with the position of esotericism, whether in those instances where he recommends the transformation of the ordinary mind, or when he upholds the ideal of gnosis or no-mind, or when he recommends initiation as a requirement on the path towards wisdom.

ETHICAL DIMENSION OF *THE SAYINGS OF GORAKH*

Ethical ideas and ideals promulgated in *The Sayings of Gorakh* are intimately related to the concerns of yoga. In this regard also, it is appropriate and meaningful to approach the Náths as an esoteric current. Their ethics have a primarily practical dimension: 'good' and 'bad' are judged in accordance to the general principles of yogic *sadhana* and the peculiar idiosyncrasies related to the treatment of the *bindu.* Celibacy is encouraged, not because there is a moral stain attached to sexuality, but because the preservation of the semen is essential to the praxis of yoga. The same practical concerns are at the root of

GBS 265. "man bámdhuňgá pavan sytím pavan bámdhuňgá man syum / tab bolaiga kovat syum / man tera kl mál mQndfl, pavana daum ra baháT / man pavan ká gam nahlm, tahám rahai lyau lál."

precepts against religious formalism: what is emphasized is, again, an esoteric dimension and inner understanding of the nature of religious observances.

Jogis do not seek salvation; they expect that performing yogic *sddhana* will result in the acquisition of powers, the *siddhis,* and the obtainment of the elixir, the *amrt,* which leads to immortality. The ethical dimension of their practice is solely concerned with the methodological assumptions of *hatha* yoga. From that perspective, they are a separate and self-sufficient group, who base their moral behaviour on the expectations of their own ideological position and practical orientation. I have been claiming that the Naths are best viewed as an esoteric current; given the primacy of praxis over theory that is characteristic of the occult, it is a telling sign confirming my thesis that the ethical concerns of the *jogis* are also of practical nature. Let us investigate the main issues.

There is a marked tendency, in *The Sayings of Gorakh,* to emphasize that the concepts of 'sin and virtue,' *pap* and *punya,* do not apply to the *jogis.* This should not be construed in the sense that Gorakhnath recommends antinomianism. The intended message is that yogis have to transcend the dualism implied, *inter alia,* in the notions of right and wrong. In the text called *Sikhya Darsan,* Gorakhnath utters a steady chant *(abical japam)* at the level of the head *cakra* that is "not smeared by virtue or sin."[74] The colophon to this and a number of other texts ends with a formulaic expression that "Gorakh's disciples are ... not smeared by sin, nor overcome by virtue."[75] The yogic achievement is thus assigned to the realm that is 'beyond good and evil.' And, to the degree that the concept of sin is operational at all, it is understood that it is eradicated through the practice of yoga. Gorakhnath asserts that "day by day, the fire devours the

[74] ***Gorakh Bam, Sikhya Darsan.*** **"badant gorakh abical japam / lipai nahlm taham pumn na papam."**

sins.' The fire in question is the fire of yoga, which 'cooks' the practitioner into an adept; in other words, this is the fire of *kundalirii sakti.* The implication is that the method of practical morality needed to remove the 'sins' lies in the discipline of yoga.

The ethics of the Nath Siddhas is pragmatic and wed to the concerns of yoga. If the latter is practiced satisfactorily, there is no negative moral judgement involved even in those situations that, from a superficial point of view, do not accord with the conventional expectations of yogic behaviour. The most radical example of this attitude is put forward in an already quoted *sabad,* which claims that there is no harm involved even if the yogi engages in a sexual act - otherwise emphatically argued against - provided that the semen has not been discharged: "Those who in making love preserve the *bindu,* / They are Gorakh's brothers."[77] The similar spirit is expressed in the verses that assert: "You may laugh, you may play, but you should maintain meditation. / You should speak day and night about the wisdom of *brahman.* / Do not break your meditation when laughing and playing."[78] Dedication to the principles of yoga surpasses other concerns; if the discipline is maintained, no harm should accrue to the *jogT.*

Gorakhnath advises going beyond the duality implied in the opposites of good and bad. The royal road that leads to the freedom from all constraints is yoga. It is significant that the description of the iimbs' of yoga, contained in the *Goraksa Sataka,* a Sanskrit text translated by Briggs, there is no mention of *yama* and *niyama,* which are the

Ibid, "srl gorakh sikhya ... pape na lipante punne na harante." See also *Gorakh Bdni,* **the colophons to** *Prdmn Saiikall, Narvai Bodh, Atma Bodh, Pane Matra,* **and** *Gorakh-Ganes Gusfi.*

[76] *Gorakh Bdni, Atma Bodh,* **15. "ahanisi agni pap kum khai."**

[77] **GBS 141. "bhog karantam je byand rakhai te gorakh ka gurbhai."**

[78] **GBS 8. "hasiba kheliba dhariba dhyarnn / ahanisi kathiba brahma giyarnn / hasai khelai na karai man bhang."**

constituents of Patanjali's yoga that deal with ethical issues. The same is true of another important text, the *Gorak$a-vacana-samgrahah,* which also defines yoga as consisting of 'six limbs,' without *yama* and *niyama.*[80] It would be wrong, however, to assume that Gorakh dispenses with morality altogether. There are unambiguous messages in *The Sayings of Gorakh* that stress the importance of ethical living. There is no contradiction here. Gorakh either recommends transcending the duality of ethical opposites from the position of the ultimate truth, or he ties the moral arguments to the overall interest of yogic discipline, which are of particular importance especially at the beginning of practice. In either case, ethical teachings are formulated in accordance with the pragmatic Weltanschauung of the *hatha* yoga.

The insistence on celibacy has received sufficient treatment in the foregoing sections of this study, and for that reason I will not dwell upon it in this place. I only want to stress one more time that the reasons for the anti-sexual attitudes do not lie in the moral sphere: physical sex is advised against because of the importance attached to the *bindu* as the potential elixir of immortality. In addition, Gorakhnath admonishes his followers that, in order to practice yoga, they must "first get rid of lust, anger, and egotism."[81] There is a mutual correlation between moral uprightness and the mental concentration that is necessary for yogic practice. For that reason, Gorakh urges his

[79] ***Gorak$a Sataka, 1.*** **"Postures, control of breath, withdrawal of the senses from their external objects, fixing of the mind upon a single object, abstract meditation and identification of the self with the object of meditation, these, they say, are the six stages of the Yoga." In Briggs, *Gorakhnath,* 2285-6. Cf. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra 2, 29:* "Restraint, Observance, Posture, Regulation of breath (Pranayama), Abstraction, Concentration, Meditation and Trance are the eight accessories of Yoga." In Prasada, *Patanjali's Yoga Siitra,* 155.**

[80] **See *Gorak§a-vacana-sarpgrahah,* 62: "asanam pranasamrodhah pratyaharasca dharana / dhyanam samadhiretani yogangani vadanti sat."** In **Banerjea, *Philosophy of Gorakhnath,* 337.**

[81] ***Gorakh Barii, Narvai Bodh,* 2. "pahlai arambha, charau kam krodh ahamkar."**

follower: "The *nath* says, listen oh *avadhut I* Be firm, keep your mind in control! / Give up lust, anger and egotism! / That is [equal] to going to all [holy] places."[82]

The *jogis* are often perceived as being prone to use - and misuse - various intoxicants. Briggs reports that, "Accusations are made of hypocrisy, and of bad habits, such as drinking and the use of drugs. ... They ... use spirituous liquors, smoke ganja [marijuana] and eat opium."[83] In this respect, Gorakh is unequivocal: intoxicants and yoga do not mix. "If someone, having become a yogi, / Scorns other people and consumes wine, meat, and *bhang* [hemp], / He causes 71.000 of his ancestors to go to Hell."[84] It has to be emphasized, however, that the main reason for this position vis-a-vis intoxicants lies in the practical concern of yogic discipline. Intoxicants are rejected not because there is something inherently amoral about their use, but because their effect is contrary to the practice of yoga as envisioned by Gorakhnath. The reason is stated explicitly: "Eating *bhang* destroys wisdom and meditation."[85] The prohibition is utilitarian, rather than being rooted in abstract moralizing.

The Nathist tendency to internalize the performance of spiritual duties extends also to moral issues. In the following *sabad,* Gorakh suggests inner correlates to the performance of daily ritual baths: "Truth and virtuous conduct are the [first] two baths. / The thirds is [listening to] the guru's speech. / The fourth bath is [instructing] the disciples. The fifth bath is compassion. / The child Gorakh performs these five pure baths

GBS 29. "näth kahai turn sunahu re avadhü dirh kari räkhahu cTyä / kam krodh ahamkär nibärau tau sarbai disantar klyä."

[83] **Briggs,** *Gorakhnäth,* **202, 55.**

[84] **GBS 164. "jogT hoi par nindyäjhakhai / mad mäms aru bhäiigi jo bhakhai / ikotarasai purikhä narakhi jäl." Cf. GBS 165, 208, 213, 241.**

[85] **GBS 165. "bhängi bhakhant gyämn dhyämn khovant."**

every day." The implication is, again, that *jogis* value inner disposition, an interior 'religion,' over and against external observances. That they consider moral uprightness preferable to the letter of the law is a telling sign that the charges of immorality, so often leveled at them, are without support, at least as far as the message of *The Sayings of Gorakh* is concerned. It is true that Gorakhnath advises against (empty) display of religiosity, insisting that the truthfulness to the inner spirit of one's duties surpasses their outward performance, but he is by no means antinomian in his directive. His position on this issue is unambiguous: "The root of yoga is compassion and generosity."[87]

In conclusion, the ethical concerns of the Nath yogis, as they are exemplified in *The Sayings of Gorakh,* exhibit a character that is in essential agreement with the position of esotericism. This position is mostly reflected on two levels. On the one hand, abstract morality is subordinated to the requirements that are inherent to the discipline of yoga. Moral ideal is correlated to the vision of an ideal yogi. On the other hand, Gorakhnath insists that moral uprightness exerted in the pursuit of the 'interior religion' surpasses outward obedience to the norms and obligations of the 'external' (exoteric!) religion. At the highest level of reckoning - and that level is accessed at the 'summit of the sky,' in *sahasrdr cakra* - ordinary morality is transcended, as are the notions of good and bad. As Gorakh states, once the yogi has awakened to his own self, "The body is untouched by sin or by virtue."[88]

GBS 258. "satyo sTlam doy asnamn tritlye guru badhak / catrathe sisa asnan pancame daya asnan / ye pane asnan nirmala niti prati karat gorakh bala."

[87] **GBS 228. "jog ka mul hai daya dan." Cf. GBP 32: 4.**

[88] *Gorakh Bam, Atma Bodh, colophon,* **"pape na punne liye na kaya / atmam bodh kathant srl gorakhraya."**

MIND IN ACTION: A CORRELATION BETWEEN CONCEPTS OF IMAGINATION AND MEDITATION

The undisciplined mind is, as far as the *jogis* are concerned, an enemy. The mind, however, may and should be yoked through the discipline of yoga. It has to be harmonized with the breath and the semen and it has to reach the highest *cakra.* This process is customarily designated as the practice of meditation, *dhyan.* Sometimes, as Teun Goudriaan reminds, the mind is conceptualized as the instrument of inner or 'mental worship,' *manasapuja.* My proposal, already advanced on several occasions, is that yogic practice of *dhyan* or *manasapuja* is comparable to what is in Western esotericism understood as the exercise of imagination. Now I will elaborate on this issue.

loan Couliano defines magic as 'the science of the imaginary.' Henry Corbin, whose work on the concept of imagination is seminal, stresses "on the one hand the notion of the *Imagination* as the *magical* production of an *image...;* and, on the other hand, the notion of the image as a body (a *magical* body, a *mental* body)...".[89] Antoine Faivre, in discussing the Renaissance elaboration of the idea, asserts the conclusion that "It was a matter of training the imagination to make of it an instrument of allowing the acquisition of divine powers."[90] These ideas are of utmost importance if applied to, or 'translated' into, the mental discipline of the Nath Siddhas. This is how I see the correlation working:

Let us start with the imagination as 'the magical production of an image.' In the case of the Nath yogis, the most important of these images are those of the *cakras.* As is

[89] Corbin, *Alone with the Alone,* **179; italics as in the original. Corbin adds, "But a warning is necessary at the very outset: this** *Imaginatio* **must not be confused with** *fantasy.* **As Paracelsus already observed, fantasy, unlike Imagination, is an exercise of thought without foundation in nature, it is the 'madman's cornerstone.'" Ibid.**

well known, meditation on and visualization of the *cakras,* done in combination with breathing exercises while seated in the yogic posture, is one of the central practices in tantric yoga. Yogic and tantric literature abounds with descriptions of *cakras.* A short text called *Asp Cakr,* contained in the *Gorakh Bam,* states for example that "The first *cakra* situated at the anus is called the 'basis' *[adhar],* its lotus has round petals, [there you should] hold the breath [by counting] one hundred. Above that *cakra* is *dristcakra,* at the level of penis, its lotus has six petals ...".[91] The list continues until all the *cakras* has been enumerated, together with a description of their 'lotuses' and the number of their 'petals.' Very often, the *cakras* are represented in an elaborate form, their description consisting not only of the number of petals, but also of the presiding deities, appropriate colours, mantras, and other elements.

Now, in order to work on these *cakras,* the yogi has to visualize them. They do not exist materially, as Bharati reminds us of the plain fact. The yogi has to keep their images in his mind vividly, while performing *bandhas* and breathing exercises. This practice is crucial for the success in yoga. The implication is that the performance of yoga is conditioned by the ability to create and maintain images in one's mind. This ability, that comes under the heading of meditation *(dhydn)* in the terminology of yoga is exactly the 'magical production of an image' mentioned by Corbin. The image (in this case, of the *cakras)* is produced 'magically' in the sense that it has been *created* (one could say, *ex nihilo)* through the disciplined mental effort of the practitioner. Meditation on and

[90] **Faivre, "Vis Imaginativa: (A Study of Some Aspects of Magical Imagination and Its Mythical Founders)," in *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition,* 101.**

[91] ***Gorakh Barii, A$f Cakr.* "prathamem adhar cakr bolie guda asthamne, cakr dal kamval, khafcsai sams / tis cakr upari drisicakr, ling asthamne sat dal kamval..."**

[92] **See, for example, the elaborate description of the *cakras* given in *Siva Sarphita* V: 56-131. Cf. the chart reproduced in Barthwal, *Traditions of Indian Mysticism,* 164-5.**

[93] **The same remarks apply to the visualization of the *kundalim* and of her 'ascent' through the spine.**

visualization of the *cakras* is an act of the magical production of images, which is imagination.

Corbin states that imagination also implies 'the notion of the image as a body (a *magical* body, a *mental* body).' Within the framework of yogic *sddhana,* this magical or mental body is one that Indian terminology classifies as the 'subtle body,' *suksm sarir.* With regards to this issue, White writes that, "Crucial to the initiation process [as encountered in yoga and tantra] is the notion that within the gross body of the human microcosm or protocosm there is a subtle, yogic body that is the mesocosmic replica of the divine, universal macrocosm or metacosm."[94] The above-described *cakras* are situated and operative in this subtle body, as is the *kundalirii.* Siva and Sakti dwell in that body. If this body is cultivated, if it has been perfected, this body will be immortal. Dasgupta refers to such a perfected body as the 'yoga-body' and claims: "Such a yoga body *(yogo-deha)* is rare even to the gods; it is a body bereft of all limitations and bondage and at the same time possessing great powers; it is limitless like the sky but purer even than the sky."[95]

The immortal body created through yoga is the basis and vehicle of immortality. This body is created through the process of imagination consisting of visualization and concentration on the image of the body decorated with *cakras* and '72.000' subtle conduits of energy. It is 'possessing great powers,' and 'rare even to gods.' Here we have a cluster of mutually related notions of great importance. Image is a body, literally. Concentrated imagination of the yogi results in the *creation* of a yogic body. This body is also powerful. Faivre's remark that 'It was a matter of training the imagination to make

[94] **White, "Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition," in** *Tantra in Practice,* **14.**
[95] **Dasgupta,** *Obscure Cults,* **220.**

of it an instrument of allowing the acquisition of divine powers' is absolutely meaningful when applied to the creation of the yogic body. Through it, the yogi becomes immortal and powerful, surpassing even the gods, becoming a god himself.[96] (Deification is, in fact, the culmination of the process of transmutation, which is an integral constituent of esotericism.) And finally, since yogic work centers on the subtle body and its energies, and since the perfected subtle body is the final aim of the *hatha* yoga, and since this body is created through the disciplined use of imagination, the yoga itself may be defined as 'the science of the imaginary.' In that sense, yoga is analogous to magic as conceptualized by Couliano. This is an important conclusion, deserving further research.

To conclude: In this chapter, I demonstrated that as far as the ideology of the Nam Siddhas is concerned, it is again meaningful to see them as an esoteric current. They insist on the supremacy of the practical aspect of the discipline of yoga and on the value of gurus and lineages, while doctrinal issues and even formal affiliation within the category of 'Hinduism' are to them of secondary importance and value. Even the ethical position is subordinated to the pragmatic orientation of *hatha* yoga. This practical orientation is congenial to the occult and esotericism, as much as is the fluidity of doctrinal and denominational boundaries. Finally, while discussing the yogic approach to the discipline of the cultivated mind, my purpose was to draw a parallel between the concepts of imagination, as used in Western esotericism, and meditation, as conceptualized in yoga. My overall conclusion is that in this regard also, as far as the attitude towards mind and mental phenomena is concerned, esotericism remains a useful

[96] The perfected body of the yogi is also called a 'divya deha,' the 'divine body' and "this is the *Siddhi* or the perfection after which the Siddhas aspired." Ibid., 219.

conceptual category through which to understand the Nâth Siddhas and the ideas expressed in *The Sayings of Gorakh.* I am also remain inclined to conclude, on the basis of comparison conducted here, that there are a significant number of formal similarities between Western and Indian esotericisms. I suggest investigating the implications of these conclusions in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION: ESOTERICISM, TANTRA, AND THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURES

> We are always in danger of drawing our own eye, for we depict our own vision when we think we are depicting the world. The choice of lens level is indeed arbitrary, but not entirely arbitrary. It is heuristic: we choose a specific level in order to make possible a specific task. Where one focuses depends on the sorts of continuities one is looking for; in all instances, something is lost and something gained.
>
> Wendy Doniger, "Myths and Methods in the Dark"

The main thesis of this study consists of the proposal that esotericism is a meaningful category through which to approach the theory and practice of the Nath yogis in particular and the phenomenon of tantra in general. At this point, I would like to devote some space to the discussion of the implications of this proposal.

My approach to the study of other cultures is based on the conviction that the 'translation of cultures' is possible and desirable.[1] To answer the question, 'What is A?' by replying that 'A is A' is a tautology and less satisfactory than 'A is [similar to] B.' In that sense, every increase of knowledge is based on some sort of comparison. This comparison is in fact already present and at work when we say that 'tantra is an element of Hinduism' for 'Hinduism' is a Western concept. Similarly, if we identify tantra as a form of religion, the translation of cultures is again already happening, for 'religion' is again a Western concept without a hundred-percent befitting equivalent in traditional

[1] **On the translation and commensurability of cultures, see Tambiah,** *Magic, Science, Religion,* **111-39.**

(non-Muslim) India. My contention is that religion, as employed uncritically, is too broad and in that sense, and to that degree, an imperfect category to be applied to tantra and yoga of the Nath Siddhas.

If, however, the Nath Siddhas are viewed through the conceptual lenses of esotericism, we will find that the features of our 'subject' appear more clearly. Whether we conceptualize yogic *sddhana* as alchemy, magic, or esotericism in general, the categories fit. Let me reiterate my arguments. Alchemy, as a science of transmutations, explains the supremacy of the process of reversal *(ulta sddhana)* by which the semen returns to the top of the head, the *sakti* rises along the spine to meet Siva at the 'summit of the sky,' the yogic rhetoric turns the world 'upside-down' and the mortal yogi becomes an immortal adept. Magic, as a science of the imaginary oriented towards power based on the erotic principle of union, is also applicable to the theory and practice of the *jogis.* Yoga is union (eros); yogic work focuses on the imaginal (subtle) body; the fruit of yoga are the powers *(sidhis).* The Naths operate in agreement with the general principles of esotericism. Correspondences, which are at the root of belief that the whole universe is found within the body, are present. Imagination, which builds the subtle body, is present. The notion of living nature, exemplified by internally present *sakti* and by the *bindu,* is present. Transmutation is present, its essence lying in the process of reversal. The ritual transmission of knowledge and the practice of concordance are present. The correlation is complete.

My argument therefore, throughout this study, rests on the conviction that Western and Indian esotericisms are commensurable. To address the issue from one more angle, I would like to take into consideration two recently proposed definitions of tantra. I

would like to show that it is possible to extrapolate conceptual framework of the basic elements of tantra in such a way that its formal (typological) correspondence with the conceptual framework of (Western) esotericism appears as meaningful.

In his introduction to a collection of essays on the subject,[2] David Gordon White has advanced the view that tantra is a solely Asian discipline. His definition, however, although meant to be exclusive, very easily translates into Faivre's definition of esotericism. This is how White defines tantra:

> Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.[3]

Let us deconstruct this definition. It centers on the process of the appropriation of the universe (as energy) within 'the human microcosm' which implies the notion of *correspondence* between a human being and the universe: microcosm corresponds to macrocosm.[4] It tells us that the universe is in fact 'the divine energy of godhead,' that is to say, a *living nature:* 'Siva without Sakti is but a corpse,' therefore his energy *(sakti)* must be alive. To appropriate this energy in 'creative and emancipatory ways' implies a *transmutation,* whether of human subject or of the external world, for creation and emancipation are contrary to a *status quo.* Whatever has been created and emancipated has been transformed from its previous state. And to 'channel that energy within the human microcosm' refers to the work on *kundalirii sakti* and her ascent through the

[2] White, "Mapping a Tradition," in *Tantra in Practice,* 3-38.
[3] Ibid., 9.
[4] 'Ritually appropriated' energy is often called *kundalini sakti,* which corresponds to the greater *sakti* understood as the universe, which is the 'concrete manifestation of the divine energy of godhead.'

cakras, which process (the 'channeling') is based on the cultivation of *imagination.* The 'ritual appropriation' of this energy implies, *inter alia,* the ritual *transmission* of tantric knowledge through rites of initiation. Finally, the fact that White denotes tantra to be the 'Asian' and not denominational 'body of beliefs and practices' is just another way of pointing out the element of the *practice of concordance* that is at the heart of this tradition White himself refers to tantra's "regional and vernacular Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain forms in Asia ...".[5] The whole definition of tantra is thus in essential agreement with the definition of Western esoteric tradition.

Similarly, in his introduction to the collection of essays on *Religions of India in Practice,* Richard H. Davis defines tantra in a manner that again indicates formal correspondence with the main features of esotericism. According to Davis,

> Hindu tantric groups most often recognize the female goddess Sakti ("energy"), Siva's consort, as the fundamental creative energy of the cosmos, and therefore as the Absolute. Tantrics view the human body as a microcosm of the universe, and focus on it as a vehicle for attaining powers and liberation. Through yogic practices and ritual activities the tantric adept seeks to inculcate knowledge physically. Rather than seeking a disembodied escape from bondage or a devotional relationship with divinity, tantrics set as their highest goal the transformation of the body itself into divinity.[6]

The reader will recognize that 'the creative energy of the cosmos' corresponds to the notion of 'living nature,' that 'the human body as a microcosm of the universe' assumes the presence of the principle of 'correspondences,' and that 'the transformation of the body' points to the idea of 'transmutation.' She will also notice the importance given to the 'practices and ritual activities' that are important element of occult attitude, and that

[5] **White, *Mapping a Tradition,* 9.**

the orientation towards powers that aim at divinity establishes a formal link with magic. The conclusion is that it is possible and meaningful to conceptually and analytically approach tantra as an esoteric discipline.

The insight that tantra and the yoga of the Nath Siddhas may be conceptualized as esoteric disciplines is important. Needles to say, esotericism is only a conceptual grid that, just as any other, makes selection out of the available data on the basis of convergence of several elements (correspondences, imagination, etc). It is certainly a construct, a metanarrative, a mechanism of after-thought, but at least it has an advantage in that it attempts to look for the points of concord between cultures. Instead of claiming exclusivity to either tantra or Western occultism, it is more meaningful to consider them regional variations of esotericism. I propose that esotericism should be seen as at least cross-cultural, if not universal phenomenon and that comparative esotericism is a meaningful, albeit insufficiently explored, avenue of scholarship.

How do we explain the apparent commensurability between Western and Indian models of esotericism? Admitting that there are no simple solutions to this complex query, I think that there are two basic, mutually non-exclusive answers. Taking the terminology with a grain of salt, we may speak of exoteric and esoteric links between the two traditions. 'Exoterically' speaking, Indian and Western esotericisms share certain elements that are the result of historical contacts. Let us take the example of alchemy: Indian alchemists were in contact with both Chinese[7] and Islamic[8] alchemical traditions.

[6] **Richard H. Davis, "Introduction: A Brief History of Religions in India," in** *Religions of India in Practice,* **ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 41.**

[7] **"Since India's original fascination with alchemy most probably arose out of early contacts with a China (India was exporting Buddhism to China in this period) whose Taoist speculative alchemical tradition has been developing since the second century A.D., one might conclude that such traditions reached south India via a maritime route." White,** *Alchemical Body,* **53.**

Both Chinese[9] and Islamic[10] alchemical ideas and practices were disseminated to the West. Similarly, tantra has moved between Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and even Muslim traditions in India, and it has traveled from India to Nepal, China, Tibet, and other countries. And in the last century or so, tantra (and yoga) has arrived in the West, becoming an important part of the Western esoteric tradition. In that sense we may speak about the diffusion of esoteric traditions through historical contacts. In this process, esotericism serves the function as 'a means of cultural transfer.'[11] By establishing links between various traditions, often situated in different countries, esotericism also operates as a means of cultural unity. This is an additional element that calls for its more comprehensive scholarly treatment.

'Esoterically' speaking, the similarities between Indian and Western occult disciplines lie in the nature of the functioning of the human mind. Here I have in mind what loan Couliano has called a cognitive approach to the genesis and 'transmission' of religious (and other) ideas.[12] Following and elaborating on the ideas of scholars such as Claude Levi Strauss and Mircea Eliade, Couliano sees the operations of the human mind as the driving force behind the construction of diverse religious (as well as social and

To give just one example, relevant to the Indian sufi tradition of the ShattarTs, established in the second half of the fifteenth century. "The ShattarTs, probably more than any other spiritual lineage, appropriated Indian yogic practices into their regimen. Among Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus's many compositions is the Persian *Bahr al-Hayat* **('The Water of Life'), a now-lost Sanskrit text on yoga." Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman, "Introduction," in** *Madhumalatl,* **23. White addresses the same issue as follows: "Finally, we know that Muslim physicians, alchemists and mystics were avid for the wisdom of their Indian counterparts, as evidenced by the translation, in the sixteenth century, of a treatise on** *hafhayoga,* **attributed to Goraksa, entitled the** *Amjiakunda* **(The Pool of Nectar)."** *Alchemical Body,* **106.**

[9] **White reports that, "As Joseph Needham has demonstrated, China stands, according the best evidence, as the primal source for the world's transmutational and elixir alchemy. According to Needham's historical reconstruction, the first-century A.D. Chinese technique of** *kirn* **or** *chin,* **'aurifaction,' would have been carried west to the Mediterranean world in perhaps the third century A.D." Ibid., 204.**

[10] **For example, "The idea of an alchemical elixir came to the West, via Islam, in the early Middle Ages." Coudert, "Elixirs," in** *Hidden Truths,* **251.**

[11] **See Wilson,** *Scandal.*

scientific) systems. It follows that, "The fundamental unity of humankind does not reside in a unity of *views or solutions,* but in the unity of the *operations* of the human mind."[13]

Esoteric thought, according to this view, operates similarly in various contexts, and this operation is essentially one of internalization. As soon as a religious practice is internalized, the notion of correspondences ("the outside and inside are one"[14]) *necessarily* follows, the imagination is *necessarily* there (the inner cosmos not being observable by physical senses), as are the notions of transmutation[15] and living nature.[16] Esoteric thought also typically operates in the symbolic mode,[17] going beyond rigid identifications, finding similarities between differing phenomena of reality and various cultural systems,[18] which results in the practice of concordance.

I am convinced that every exoteric religion has its esoteric complement. This conviction should not be construed as if to mean that every esoteric tradition is alike. Being an inner aspect of a particular tradition, esoteric teaching - and practice - shares in a number of formal elements of that tradition and it is shaped by the continuing process of historical change. In that sense, the esoteric 'what' differs from case to case; but the

[12] See loan Couliano, Introduction: Religion as a System," in Mircea Eliade, loan P. Couliano and Hillary S. Wiesner, *The HarperCollins Concise Guide to World Religions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 1-7.

[13] Ibid., 7; emphasis in the original. Couliano adds that, "no matter how bizarre some religions may appear to us at first sight, they can ultimately be understood as the dwelling of human minds on certain hypotheses concerning nature and existence, wrestling with the perennial mysteries of life, death, good and evil, human purpose, justice, and so forth." Ibid., 7.

[14] *Gorakh Bam, Park Mdtra,* 4.

[15] The idea of transmutation follows necessarily from the idea of correspondence between micro- and macrocosm. The reason is that this correspondence implies the ultimate identity between the two, which means that human microcosm transforms its initial limited state by becoming one with the divine macrocosm.

[16] The idea of living nature, the idea that the middle ground between human being and divinity is also impregnated with spiritual value, necessarily stems from the notion of correspondence.

[17] *"And magic always depends on the idea of symbolism and of language."* Wittgenstein, as quoted in Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion,* 59; italics in the original.

[18] Tambiah remarks how this idea "has been magnificently documented by Foucault in *The Order of Things,* in terms of that sixteenth-century European thought known as the 'doctrine of signatures,' in which the notion of 'resemblance' played a key role in the relation between man and the phenomena of his cosmos." Ibid., 87.

esoteric 'how' seems to be common and consistent: emphasis is placed on correspondences, on the role of imagination, the possibility of transmutation, and the presence of living nature. Esoteric traditions also seem to be alike in the ritual means of the transfer of their knowledge, and in the insistence that the ultimate truth, the gnosis, transcends the narrow boundaries of particular denominations and that it may be discovered as an inner aspect of every religion. In the final analysis, it may be said that various esoteric traditions are engaged in an array of complex, dynamic processes characterized by the interplay of elements that display features of both the sameness and difference. I have attempted to elucidate some aspects of the former, but this is only a methodological choice and a personal predilection, and as such it should not be taken as a suggestion that we should neglect the latter.

WORKS CITED

Alper, Harvey P, ed. *Understanding Mantras.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991 (1st. ed. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1989).

Banerjea, Akshaya Kumar. *Philosophy of Gorakhnath: With Goraksha-Vacana-Sangaraha.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999 (1st ed. Gorakhpur, 1962).

Barthwal, Pitambaradatta. *Traditions of Indian Mysticism: Based Upon Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry.* New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1978.

Briggs, George Weston. *Gorakhnath and the Känphafa Yogis.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998 (1st ed. Calcutta, 1938).

Brooks, Douglas Renfrew. *The Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Sakta Tantrism.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Cantlie, Audrey. "Aspects of Hindu Asceticism." In *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-cultural Studies in Symbolism.* Ed. loan Lewis, 247-67. London: Academic Press, 1977.

Cashin, David. *The Ocean of Love: Middle Bengali Sufi Literature and the Fakirs of Bengal.* Stockholm: Association of Oriental Studies, 1995.

Corbin, Henry. *Alone -with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Süfism of Ibn Arabi. With a New Preface by Harold Bloom.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997 (1966).

Couliano, loan P. *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance.* Trans. Margaret Cook. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

——, "Introduction: Religion as a System." In Mircea Eliade, loan P. Couliano, with Hillary S. Wiesner, *The HarperCollins Concise Guide to World Religions.* San Francisco: Harper, 2000 (1st ed. 1991), 1-7.

Dasgupta, Shashibhushan. *Obscure Religious Cults.* Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1969 (1st ed. 1942).

Davis, Richard H. "Introduction: A Brief History of Religions in India." In *Religions of India in Practice.* Ed. Donald S. Lopez, 3-52. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Defouw, Hart and Robert Svoboda. *Light on Life: An Introduction to the Astrology of India.* New Delhi: Penguin, 1996 (1st ed. 1992).

Doniger, Wendy. "Myths and Methods in the Dark." *The Journal of Religion,* 76, 4 (1996): 531-47.

Dvivedi, Hazariprasad. *Näth Sampradäy.* Allahabad: Lokbharati Prakashan, 1999 (1st ed. 1966).

Eliade, Mircea. *The Forge and the Crucible.* 2nd ed. Trans. Stephen Corrin. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978 (1st ed. 1962).

——. "What is Alchemy?" In *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult.* Ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan, 243-7. New York: Macmillan, 1989.

——. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Faivre, Antoine. *Access to Western Esotericism.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1994.

——. "Esotericism." In *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult.* Ed. Lawrence E.

Sullivan, 38-48. New York: Macmillan, 1989.

——. *The Eternal Hermes: From Greek God to Alchemical Magus.* Trans. Joscelyn Godwin. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1995.

——. *Golden Fleece and Alchemy.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1993.

——. *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism.* Trans. Christine Rhone. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2000.

——. "What is Occultism?" In *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult.* Ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan, 3-9. New York: Macmillan, 1989.

Faivre, Antoine and Karen-Claire Voss. "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions." *Numen,* Vol. 42 (1995): 48-77.

Foucault, Michel. *The Care of the Self.* The History of Sexuality, vol. 3. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

——. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress." In *The Foucault Reader.* Ed. Paul Rabinow, 340-72. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Fuller, C. J. *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Gautam, Camanlal. *Sri Gorakhndth Caritr.* Bareli: Sanskriti Sansthan, 1998 (1981?).

Godwin, Joscelyn. *The Theosophical Enlightenment.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1994.

Gold, Ann Grodzins. *A Carnival of Parting: The Tales of King Bharthari and King Gopi Chand as Sung and Told by Madhu Natisar Nath of Ghatiyali, Rajasthan.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

——."Gender and Illusion in a Rajasthani Yogic Tradition." In *Gender, Genre, and*

Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions. Eds. Arjun Appadurai, Frank J. Korom, and Margaret A. Mills, 102-35. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

Gold, Daniel and Ann Grodzins Gold. "The Fate of the Householder Nath." *History of Religions* 24, no. 2 (November 1984): 113-32.

Goldberg, Ellen. *The Lord Who is a Half Woman: Ardhandrisvara in Indian and Feminist Perspective.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2002.

Gorakh-Bäni. Ed. Pitambaradatta Barthwal. Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1955 (1st ed. 1942).

Goudriaan, Teun. *Mäyä Divine and Human: A Study of Magic and its Religious Foundations in Sanskrit Texts, with a Particular Attention to a Fragment on Visnu's Mäyä as Preserved in Bali.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978.

Goudriaan, Teun and Sanjukta Gupta. *Hindu Tantric and Sdkta Literature.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981.

Grimes, John. *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy: Sanskrit Terms Defined in English.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1996.

Gupta, Sanjukta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan. *Hindu Tantrism.* Leiden and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1979.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika, The. Trans. Pancham Sinh. Allahabad: Panini Office, 1914-5.

Janowitz, Naomi. *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.

Jantzen, Grace. *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Kalaprakasika: The Standard Book on the Election (Mahoorta) System. Trans. N. P. Subramania Iyer. New Delhi: Asian Education Services, 1982.

Karambelkar, V.W. "Matsyendranätha and his YoginT Cult." *Indian Historical Quarterly,* 31 (1955): 362-74.

Kaviraj, Gopinath. "Philosophy of the Näthas." In *Selected Writings of M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj.* 159-64. Varanasi: Mata Anandamayee Ashram, 1990.

——. " Some Aspects of the History and Doctrines of the Näthas." In *Notes on Religion and Philosophy.* Ed. Gaurinath Sastri, 56-79. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 1987.

——. "The System of Cakras According to Gorak§anätha." In *Notes on Religion and Philosophy.* Ed. Gaurinath Sastri, 47-55. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 1987.

Kieckhefer, Richard. *Magic in the Middle Ages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 (1st ed. 1989).

Kiehnle, Catharina. *Songs on Yoga: Texts and Teachings of the Mahärästrian Näths.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997.

King, Richard. *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

——. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East.'* London: Routledge, 1999.

Kinsley, David. *Tantric Vision of the Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahävidyäs.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998.

Kripal, Jeffrey J. *Kali's Child: The Mystical and The Erotic in the Life and Teachings of*

Ramakrishna. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 (1st ed. 1995).

Lehrich, Christopher I. *The Language of Demons and Angels: Cornelius Agrippa's Occult Philosophy.* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003.

Luck, Georg. *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Mallik, Kayani. *Siddha-Siddhänta-Paddhati and Other Works of the Nätha Yogis.* Poona: Oriental Book House, 1954.

Matsyendra Sarphita: Ascribed to Matsyendrandtha. Part 1. Ed. Debabrata Sensharma. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1994.

McGregor, Ronald Stuart. *Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984.

——, ed. *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary.* Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997 (1st ed. 1993).

McLeod, W. H. *Guru Ndnak and the Sikh Religion.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001 (1st ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

Mishra, Narayan, trans. *Collection of Gorak$a's Sayings: Translation of Goraksa-Vacana-Sangraha.* Ed. Gordan Djurdjevic. Unpublished manuscript. Benares and Vancouver, 2003.

Mishra, Vijay. *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1998.

Olivelle, Patrick, ed. and trans. *Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism: Yatidharmasamuccaya ofYddava Prakdsa.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1995.

——, trans. *Upanisads: Translated from the Original Sanskrit.* Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 1996.

Openshaw, Jeanne. *Seeking Bâuls of Bengal.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Owen, Alex. *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Padmâvatî of Malik Muhammad Jaisi. Trans. A.G. Shirreff. Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1944.

Padoux, André. *Vâc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras.* Trans. Jacques Gontier. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992 (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1990).

---. "What Do We Mean by Tantrism?" In *The Roots of Tantra.* Eds. Katherine Anne Harper and Robert L. Brown, 17-24. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2002.

Pâtanjali's Yoga Sûtras: With the Commentary of Vyâsa and the Gloss of Vâchaspati Misra. Trans. Râma Prasâda. Allahabad: Panini Office, 1912.

Petersson, Olof. "Magic-Religion: Some Marginal Notes to an Old Problem." *Ethnos* 22 (1957).

Potter, Karl H. *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Rennie, Bryan S. *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1996.

Sanderson, Alexis. "Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir." In *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History.* Eds. Michael

Carrithers, Steven Collins and Steven Lukes, 190-216. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Shu'al, Katon. *Sexual Magick.* 3rd ed. Oxford: Mandrake of Oxford, 1995.

Silburn, Lilian. *Kundalini: The Energy of the Depths. A Comprehensive Study Based on the Scriptures of Nondualistic Kasmir Saivism.* Trans. Jacques Gontier. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1988.

Singh, Mohan. *Gorakhnath and Medieval Hindu Mysticism.* Lahore: Oriental College, 1937.

Siva Samhita, The. Trans. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu. Allahabad: Panini Office, 1914.

Smith, David. "Aspects of the Interrelationship of Divine and Human Bodies in Hinduism." *Religion,* 19 (1989): 211-9.

Staal, Frits. "The Himalayas and the Fall of Religion." In *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes.* Ed Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, 38-51. Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982.

——. *Ritual and Mantras: Rules Without Meaning.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996.

Swartz, Michael D. *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Tantresh, Prakash Nath. *Rajasthan kd Ndth Sampraddy.* Ajmer: Arya Brothers Bookseller, 1993.

Thurman, Robert A. F. "Magico-Religious Powers." In *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy,*

and the Occult. Ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan, 224-8.

Tiryakian, Edward A. "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture." In *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult.* Ed. Edward A. Tiryakian, 257-80. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.

Urban, Hugh. *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

——. "Elitism and Esotericism: Strategies of Secrecy and Power in South Indian Tantra and French Freemasonry." *Numen,* Vol. 44, 1 (1997): 1-38.

——. *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Varenne, Jean. *Yoga and the Hindu Tradition.* Trans. Derek Coltman. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976 (1st ed. Paris, 1973).

Vaudeville, Charlotte. "KabTr and Interior Religion." *History of Religions,* 3 (1964): 191-201.

——. *A Weaver Named Kabir.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Versluis, Arthur. "Mysticism and the Study of Esotericism: Part II." *Esoterica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* 5 (2003): 27-40.

——. "What is Esoteric? Methods in the Study of Western Esotericism." *Esoterica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* 4 (2002): 1-15.

White, David Gordon. *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

——. "Indian Alchemy." In *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult.* Ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan, 261-4. New York: Macmillan, 1989.

——. "Le monde dans le corps du Siddha: Microcosmologie dans les traditions médiévales indiennes." In *Images du corps dans le monde hindou.* Eds. Véronique Bouillier and Gilles Tarabout, 189-212. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2002.

——. "Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition." In *Tantra in Practice.* Ed. David Gordon White, 3-38. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.

——. "The Wonders of Sri Mastnâth." In *Religions of India in Practice.* Ed. Donald S. Lopez, 399-411. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

. —. "Why Gurus Are Heavy?" *Numen,* Vol. 31, 1 (1984), 40-73.

Wilson, Peter Lamborn. *Scandal: Essays in Islamic Heresy.* Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1988.

APPENDIX

The *sabads* and *pads* from

the *GORAKHBANI*

translated by

Shukdev Singh and Gordan Djurdjevic

A NOTE TO THE TRANSLATIONS

The following translations of the *sabad* and *pad* sections from the *Gorakh Bam* collection were done in Varanasi, India, in the period between November 2002 and early April 2003. I arrived in India in October 2002 and immediately began to inquire about the possibility to work with somebody on this text. I was fortunate enough to rather quickly get in touch with Dr. Shukdev Singh, a former professor of Hindi at the Benares Hindu University. Shukdev Singh has already successfully collaborated with Western scholars on several projects.[1] We arranged our first meeting over phone; the next day he came with his driver to pick me up and we then went to his house and agreed on the procedure of our future sessions. We decided to meet three times a week, that I was to work on the translations on my own, and that he would be checking them and providing commentaries during our meetings.

I would translate as much as I could in between our meetings. On those days when we were to have our session, I would started in the morning from my residence close to Assi ghat in the southern part of Benares, and ride the bike to my destination. It would take me approximately half-hour of a slow bike-ride through the congested streets of the city to reach his house in Sundarpur, in the outskirts of Benares. We would typically sit together for an hour, often longer, drinking tea and 'fighting with the text' as he was prone to say in his Rajput idiom. I would read my translations and he would correct them, spicing his commentaries with innumerable stories about Naths, *tantrikas,*

[1] **The best known of these collaborations is probably** *The Bljak of Kabir,* **trans. Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986 [San Francisco, 1983]). See also a more recent translation of "The Deeds of Prahlad," trans. David Lorenzen and Shukdeo Singh, in David N. Lorenzen,** *Praises to a Formless God: Nirguni Texts from North India* **(Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1996), 41-74.**

and the Indian culture in general. Sometimes my translations would be accepted as correct *in toto ("Sâbâs,"* he would say, *"bahut acchâ* translation, "); sometimes I would cross some of them out completely. In general, the wording and the style were mine own, but there were also a significant number of corrections. Dr. Singh was always happy when we entered into occasional disagreement over the translations: he often felt that I was too complacent in accepting his corrections and that I should fight more forcefully for my vision. From the beginning to the end, we both felt and talked about this as collaboration, as a mutual project.

On my return from India, my first job was to type the hand-written text into the computer. I tried to improve and correct what I felt to be more problematic translations. On few occasions, I asked for and received comments on these from Dr. Ken Bryant. We did not go through the whole text but on the basis of a sample that he read, Ken expressed his impression that the translations were generally correct. Sasha Paradis went through the whole text, corrected grammatical mistakes and gave several stylistic suggestions, but did not intervene in the text itself. Needless to say, all the remaining mistakes and inaccuracies in these translations are my own responsibility.

[2] **Towards the end of this period, during March and early April 2003, we would meet five times a week.**

THE SAYINGS OF GORAKH

Sabadi

1. Inhabited is not empty, empty is not inhabited.
   It is inaccessible and mysterious.
   At the summit of the sky, a child is speaking.
   What kind of name could it be given?

2. The unseen should be seen, the seen should be thought upon.
   The unseen has to be kept in the heart.
   The lower Ganges should be brought up to the [top of the] Egg of Brahma,
   Where the pure has drank the water pure.

3. Right here is being, right here is non-being,
   Right here is the origin of the three triple worlds.
   The eternal community dwells here.
   This is why the countless *siddhas* have become the lords of yoga.

4. It is not in the Vedas or in the books. It is neither the Form nor the Formless.
   They are all covered under cover.
   At the summit of the sky, the word *[sabad]* emerges into light.
   There, [the yogi] comes to know the Invisible Gnostic.

5. The Invisible Gnostic has created two lamps,
Three worlds, one light.
Contemplating it, the three worlds appear,
And he selects the bright pearl.

6. It can't be read [It is not written] in the *Vedas* or the *sastras,*
In the *kitabs,* the *Koran* or in the books.
Only rare yogis understand these *pads.*
Everything else is worldly affairs.

7. You may laugh, you may play, and you may be merry.
But don't keep company with lust and anger.
You may laugh, you may play, and you may sing songs.
But keep your heart firm!

8. You may laugh, you may play, but you should maintain meditation.
You should speak day and night about the wisdom of *brahman.*
Do not break your meditation when laughing and playing.
Those established in firmness are always in the company of Gods.

9. O priest *[kazi\,* don't say 'Muhammad, Muhammad'!
Muhammad's thought is difficult.
The dagger in Muhammed's hand
Was made neither of steel nor of iron.

10. By the *sabad* he killed, by the *sabad* he revived:

Such a *plr was* Muhammad.

O priest *[kazi\,* stop pretending!

Such power is not in your body.

11. The whole world was enslaved by saying 'Lord'.

By saying 'Gorakh' it disappeared.

Muhammad was a master of *kalima* [holy words; profession of faith],

But he still died nonetheless.

12. The essence of essence, of the profound depth,

Is the sound [heard] when reaching the sky.

Having found the jewel, disappear again!

All talk and discussions are lies.

13. The talks! The discussions!

0 yogi, do not engage in false theories!

[Just as] the 68 *tirthas* are contained in the ocean,

So for you, yogi, all should burn up in the guru's mouth.

14. We are Hindus by birth; yogis by burning;

Muslims by wisdom.

Accept this path, o judge and scholar!

[It is already accepted by] Brahma, Visnu and Mahadev.

15. Accepting the *sabad,* duality ends.

Bharthari was made a king by determination, Gopicand by experience.

By determination the kings are made to transcend opposites.

By experience, yogis [attain] the supreme bliss.

16. By practicing meditation day and night,

By remaining in the unthinkable *[unman],* renouncing the accessible,

[a yogi] proclaims the inaccessible.

He who renounces hope, remaining in the *niras* [without hope] -

It is said that even Brahma is his devotee.

17. The yogi who holds above what goes below,

Who burns sex, abandons desire,

Who cuts through *mdyd* -

Even Visnu washes his feet.

18. He who does the *ajap-jap,* maintains meditation on *sunya,*

Who controls the five sense organs,

And offers his body as an oblation in the fire of Brahma -

Even Mahadev bows to his feet.

19. He who places no hope in wealth and youth,

Having no thoughts about women,

In whose body the *nad and bindu* are burnt -

Even ParvatI serves him.

20. Those who are men of ascesis from boyhood and youth,

They are the men of truth in good and in bad times.

Eating quickly, eating little -

The *nath* says: Their body is mine [= there is no distinction between

21. *Sdbad* is the lock, *sabad* is the key,

Sabad wakes *sabad.*

When *sabad* meets *sabad,*

Sabad is contained in *sabad.*

22. Travelling without path, burning without fire,

Satisfying thirst by air.

Sri (Guru) Gorakh (nath) has explained self-knowledge.

Pundits, you must understand it after reading.

23. In the circle of the sky, there is an upside-down well.

There nectar resides.

He who has a guru can drink it all.

Who is without a guru remains thirsty.

24. He [the yogi] cannot be hidden in the sky,

He cannot burn in fire; the wind can't push him in the air.

The weight of the earth can't break him, he cannot sink in the water.

When I say so, who will understand it?

25. [By its] fragrance, the whole world is fragrant.
[Due to its] taste, [all] is sweet.
If I say the truth, the true guru will accept it,
And I will see the form [of truth].

26. Die, yogi, die!
Death is sweet.
Die in that death
In which Gorakh died and saw [the truth]!

27. One should not speak in haste,
One should not stamp while walking: the feet should go slowly.
One should not be arrogant, but live simply [remain in *sahaj]:*
So says the great Gorakh

28. Those who are full are steady;
The half-full are glittery.
Hey *avadhut,* when a *siddha* meets a *siddha,*
They speak and they gain.

29. The *nath* says, listen oh *avadhut*
Be firm, keep your mind in control.
Give up lust, anger and egotism,
That is [equal] to going to all [holy] places.

30. O Lord, If I go to the forest, I am afflicted by hunger,
And in the city there is *maya.*
If I eat till I am full, the semen *[bindu]* pervades [me].
Why cook the body made from a drop of water [=semen]?

31. Do not rush upon food [or] starve to death;
Day and night, probe the secrets of the fire of *brahman.*
Do not be obstinate or lie idle:
Thus said Gorakh-dev.

32. The one in whose body the breath is balanced
Speaks little and eats little.
In the circle of the sky, the unstruck [sound] resounds.
But if [the yogi] falls into the *pinda,* it is a shame for the guru.

33. 0 *avadhut,* reduce your diet, turn away from sleep,
And you will never be ill.
Purify the body from time to time,
As some rare yogis do!

34. You should meditate in the manner of gods.
And you should eat in the manner of ghosts.
Bringing mind in breath, and remaining in the *unmarii,*
The yogis [enjoy] the essence of being.

35. O *avadhut,* in the house of sleep is the snare of death,
And in eating is the house of the thief.
In lovemaking, old age devours.
The power is in uniting the lower with the upper!

36. Too much food disturbs the senses.
It destroys wisdom, keeps the mind on lovemaking.
It prolongs sleep; death hides in it.
The heart [of such a person] is always distressed.

37. Gorakh ploughs the field in everybody's heart.
Whoever is born [from that field] belongs to us.
To everybody's heart Gorakh tells the sermon:
An unbaked pot does not hold water.

38. In everybody's heart Gorakh moves silently:
In some, he is awake; in some, he sleeps.
In everybody's heart is Gorakh, in everybody's heart is Mina [Matsyendra].
The knowledge of the self *[dtmcrn]* is experienced in guru's mouth.

39. [Wearing] wooden sandals [of an ascetic], the foot slips.
O *avadhut,* [wearing] iron chains ruins the body.
[Being] naked, keeping silent, eating [only] milk:
Yoga is not achieved in such a way.

40. The heart of the person who consumes only milk is set on [another's] house.

The naked always needs firewood.

The one who keeps silence hopes for a friend.

Without a guru, a *gudp* [ascetic robe] is not reliable.

41. The Southern yogi is cheerful.

The Eastern yogi talks too much.

The Western yogi is like a child.

The Northern yogi is a *siddha.*

42. 0 *avadhut,* the Eastern region is plagued by disease,

In the Western region is the sorrow of death.

The Southern region revels in illusion.

In the Northern region, the *siddha* yogis live.

43. The [real] cheaters cheat the ego,

And eat begged food without remorse.

They beg in three-and-a-half cities.

These *avadhuts* move in the world of Siva.

44. The [real] householder is the one who knows his body.

He keeps inside what goes outside.

Always the same towards everything, he cuts through illusion.

Such a householder should be called the form of *niranjan.*

45. The [real] householder is he who maintains the body.

Oriented towards the inside, he abandons illusion.

He maintains the body with a natural virtue *[sahaj].*

Such a householder is like the water of the Ganges.

46. Those who are immortal and pure are beyond sin and virtue.

They are beyond *sattva* and *rajas* [and *tamas]* and are empty.

They remember the *sabad* of *soham* and *hamsa.*

Theirs is the highest goal and endless *siddhis.*

47. The meditator [lit. 'heretic'] is the one who purifies his body.

Reversing his breath he lights the fire.

He does not deliberately release semen even in sleep.

Such a meditator should be considered equal to God [lit. 'reality'].

48. The mind is yogi and the body is the monastery; the five elements are the robe.

Forgiveness is sitting in the six postures.

Wisdom is the ascetic seat and good reason the wooden slippers.

Thinking is the stick.

49. In unsteadiness, the Moon decays.

In sitting, the fire of *brahman* burns.

In the oblique/ slanted position is the *gofika bandh,*

That makes the body remain as long as the earth.

50. This very mind is Sakti, this very mind is Siva.

This very mind is the life of the five elements.

The one who controls the mind and remains in the *unman,*

He may speak about the secrets of the three worlds.

50. O *avadhut,* he who closes the nine passages and controls the breath

Does business with the wind at sixty-four shops.

He renews the body in a firm position.

Discarding the shadow, he becomes a *siddha.*

51.0 *avadhut,* control the breath and remain in the *unmanl*

In the same way, sound the horn of the unstruck sound.

In the circle of the sky, a brilliant light shines.

But there is neither the Moon nor the Sun there.

52. Breathing the air in and out should be your food.

Close the nine gates.

From time to time renew the body.

Then you will master the *unmanl yoga.*

53. O *avadhut,* the breath should go to the *sahasra nidi.*

Then the myriad sounds shall ring.

The breath will drink seventy-two Moons,

When the primal light shines.

54. In the house of the [moonless] *amàvas,* the Moon sparkles,
And in the house of the *pdrnim* [the full Moon], the Sun.
In the house of the *nàd,* the *bindu* thunders,
And sounds the silent horn.

55. In the reversed *nâd'xs* the transformed *bindu.*
In the house of wind, recognize life!
It flows down from the empty circle.
Join the Moon and the Sun and remain in the *unmariî.*

56. 0 *avadhùt,* In the first *nâdïthz nàd* flashes,
And in the fiery *nidi*the wind.
In the cold *nàdï,* the *bindu* dwells.
Few yogis know [this] from experience.

57. The Sun will burn the rising wind.
In the sitting (still) wind is the Moon.
The yogi always stays in the tenth direction
Where the *bindu* dwells, there is life.

58. So many come, so many go
So many beg, so many eat
So many sit below a tree-
But with whom may Gorakh speak about his experience?

59. The scholar who reads the texts [thinks] that he should see the essence afterwards.

But [everyone] can cross to the other side by [their] actions.

Gorakhnath says, to whom should I give the *sakhf!*

There is light in every heart that animals do not see not even for a moment with their eyes.

60. 0 *avadhut,* you should pierce the diamond

By the *sabad* in the mint of the tongue.

Do well in the midst of bad.

Then the whole world is your disciple.

61. What was incomplete became fully completed

And what did not flow continues to flow down.

[But] sharper than a sword or razor is the road

About which the true guru has spoken.

62. [If it is] in the body then have hope in the *pad.*

[If it were otherwise] all the animals living in the forest [would become *siddhas].*

If there is milk, hope for *ghee.*

Action is the essence of achievement.

63. While remaining within the mind, not disclosing the secret,

The immortal words [the words of nectar] should be spoken.

If anybody in front [of you] is fire,

O *avadhut,* you should become water.

64. Staying within the *unman,* not disclosing the secret,

The nectar water should be drunk.

Renouncing [women's] loins, going to bed,

You should hear the mantra from the guru's mouth.

65. A city is graced by many waters, roots and trees.

An assembly is graced by learned elders.

A king is graced by a loyal army,

And a siddha is graced by pure and wise speech.

66. Very few know [the unity of] difference and sameness,

Very few know how to cut through duality.

Very few know the untold story,

Very few know pure and wise speech.

67. Going to the top, eating the fruit of emptiness,

One should put on the clothes of *brahman*'s fire.

Having drunk the stream of flowing nectar,

The mind becomes settled.

68. A Hindu worships in the temple,

A Muslim in the mosque.

A yogi worships the supreme [*param-pad*]

Where there is neither temple nor mosque.

69. Incomplete.

70. [If immortality is] in the body then no one should die,
But everyone looks for it in the outside universe [beyond the body].
The body is in the universe, continuously,
Says Gorakh, Matsyendra's devotee.

71. A sitting *avadhut* is like an iron rod,
A moving *avadhut* is like a fist of wind.
A sleeping *avadhut* is a living corpse,
A talking *avadhut* is a parrot in a cage.

72. Gorakh says, Oh *avadhut,* listen:
Be like this in the world:
Look with your eyes, listen with your ears,
But don't say anything with your mouth.

73. Nath says, take care of your soul,
Don't be stubborn, don't engage in discussions.
This world is a thorny bush.
Look carefully, watch your step!

74. Gorakh says, Hey *avadhut,*
Beware of Yama. If he strikes the person
On the head with his mace,
He dies, before the end [of his lifespan].

75. Discard the vision in front of the eyes,
Stop listening with the ears.
Hide the wind in front of the nose.
Then, what remains is the *nirvan-pad.*

76. Hey *avadhut,* it is said that the mind is our ball,
And remembrance our play.
With the unstruck sound, the game begins.
Then you may call the sky our field.

77. Shaving the head with the five elements,
The colourless meets the formless.
Catch the mad elephant of the mind, O *avadhut,*
And then obtain the eternal treasure.

78. It is fixed between up and down,
And sits in the middle of emptiness.
There is the meeting with the intoxicated.
Gorakhnath says, thus I reached the essence.

79. The real ascetic is the one who punishes himself,
And who ends the coming and going of the mind.
He kills the ego of the five sense organs.
Such an ascetic is like that [God].

80.1 have found it, listen, I've got this good.
With firmness [I have reached] the place of *sabad.*
I had a vision of it [embodied] in form.
Then I reached complete faith.

81. [From] the lower lotus to the centre of the upper lotus
Is the place of life.
Twelve *hamsas* will reverse their movement,
And then the light will shine.

82. Sitting in the [yogic] posture, stopping the breath,
All the functions of duality cease.
Gorakhnath says, thinking about the self
Is like watching the moon in water.

83. Gorakh says, listen *avadhut,*
The five senses should be restrained.
Know your own self,
Then you will sleep properly.

84. Food and sleep are our deadly enemies.
How to protect the guru's treasure while eating and sleeping
Reduce eating, cut down on sleep,
Take Siva and Sakti and let them meet.

85. When you know the *anahad-bandh*

You do not fall into worldly affairs or into the bonds of life and death.

Do not discharge semen [made] of blood from the body!

The yogi says, do not crush the diamond.

86. I will ask one *sabad,* please answer, merciful teacher.

How can an old one become a child?

How can an open flower become a bud?

Whoever can answer what has been asked, he is Gorakh.

87. Please listen, give up the formalities of the temple.

Having drunk nectar you [will] become a child.

Water the root with the fire of *brahman,*

And then the open flower [will] again be a bud.

88. Join the reversed breath with the sky.

Then the child's form will become visible.

When you catch the sunrise, you can catch the golden sunset and meet the wind.

Then the bound elephant will enter your hall.

89. The twelve *kalds* [of the Sun] make dry, and the sixteen *kolas* [of the Moon] nourish.

[Whoever] obtains the four *kalds* [of nectar] lives the endless life.

Light and fire are mixed together,

[The yogi] obtains the *siddhis* and drinks the four *kalds* [of nectar].

90. Those who accomplish the impossible, who thunder in the [clear] sky,
Who unlock the [state of] *unmarii,*
Those who reverse the breath, say reversed things,
Who drink the undrinkable: they are the ones who know *brahman.*

91. They write the unwritten, they see the unseen.
[Just by] touching, they achieve vision.
Thundering in emptiness, striking the *nid,*
Those who write the unwritten obtain proof by themselves.

92. Sitting in the fixed house and checking the breath,
There will never be any illness.
In a year, purify the body three times
Using *nag, bang,* and *bandspati.*

93. The light of the Moon is in the sixteen *naps,*
And the mind is in the twelve *nap's.*
The *prdn* is gathered in the *sahasra nap,*
Where Siva dwells within innumerable *kalds.*

94. O *avadhut,* the path of *ira* is called the Moon,
And the path of *pingald,* the Sun.
They say that the path of *susumni* is SarasvatI,
The residence of the three roots.

95. O *avadhut,* they say that our body is a rifle;

The breath is called gunpowder,

Agni is the match that strikes the *anahad;*

Bindu is a shot towards the sky.

96. *Kdzis* and *mullas* interpret *Kuran,*

And *brahmins,* the *Vedas.*

SarnnydsTs are lost in pilgrimages.

[No one] has found the secret of the *nirvanpad.*

97. The journey to the temples is a journey in vain.

Journeying to *tirthds,* one finds only water.

A journey with ascetics is a fruitful journey,

Where immortal words are spoken.

98. Think that the house *[mulddhar]* is the weak one,

And its *[sahasrar's]* [root] is in the house *[mulddhar].*

If anyone is intimate with the lower and the higher,

Then everything will be no less [than immortality].

99. I kill those who stand, I kill those who sit,

I kill those who are awake and those who sleep.

[My] net is spread out in the wombs of the three worlds.

So where will you go, son?

100.1 destroy [you] standing, I destroy [you] sitting,

I destroy [you] while awake and while sleeping.

I remain untouched by you in the three worlds.

Thus [says] Gorakh *avadhut.*

101. Sleep says, I am worthless,

And Brahma and Vi§nu are cheats.

I am totally ruined:

Gorakh is awake and I lie sleeping.

102. The yogi is the one who disciplines the mind.

Without going abroad, he revels in [his] kingdom.

Giving up gold and sex,

He is the lord of yoga, without fear.

103. He who gives up everything is a *samnydsi,*

The one who maintains hope in the circle of the sky.

Hearing the unstruck sound, keeping the mind in the *unman*

The *samnydsi* is he who speaks of the unreachable.

104. Lai says: I have reached the far shore.

The fools stay on this side.

But the yogi who lacks stability is a false one.

He is neither on this side or the other side [of the river].

105. The reversed breath has pierced the six *cakras,*
The hot iron has sucked up the water.
Keeping both the Moon and the Sun in one's own house,
That is what the knower of the *alakh* does.

106. *Nad is* our air.
Who sounds the *nad* disrupts the wind.
The unstruck *sabad* keeps resounding.
Sri Gorakh is announcing the signal of accomplishment.

107. Listen, o virtuous! Listen, o wise!
[Listen to] the words of the countless *siddhas.*
Bowing the head, after the true guru has been met,
The whole night passes without sleeping.

108. Know that begging is our Cow of Plenty,
And that *samsara* is our garden.
I will eat the begged food, due to the kindness of the guru,
[And that is why] at the time of death there will be no suffering.

109. With big buttocks and a fat belly,
O son, you have not met your guru.
When the body is empty and the stomach cleansed,
Then, O son, you have met your guru.

110. [There is no] *nirati* and no *surati,* no yoga nor enjoyment.

[There is no] old age nor death,

And there is no illness there.

Gorakh speaks of the oneness, where there is no talk of the *omkar.*

111. [There is] no rising and no falling, no night and no day.

The whole universe is a being without separation.

Niranjan is without branch and without root,

All pervading, neither subtle nor gross.

112. The universe will burst open and all the cities will be plundered.

No one will understand the secret.

Gorakhnath says, When the doors of the body are closed,

You may catch the five gods.

113. Ego has to be broken, the formless has to burst open,

The Ganga's and Yamuna's water has to dry out.

The Moon and the Sun have to be fixed facing each other.

O *avadhut,* learn the identity/ name of that place!

114. O Intelligence! Be alert!

Don't reinstate the ego again and again!

Give up hope in the five [senses]!

Gorakh says, They are truly wise whose mind dwells in the *unmani.*

115. Understand the message of the *siddhas,* o wise ones!

A horn resounds in the sky.

Light is planted in the path of the fish

And the reversed flower turns into a bud.

116. When the scent of the child comes, the game starts.

The house of the sky is at the distance of twelve fingers.

Gorakh says, Son, you will live a long life.

The body will not fall; you will not go into the realm of Death.

117. Flesh [comes] from grains, bones from the air.

To coat them with essence, you should eat breath.

Gorakh says, Son, you will live a long life.

The body will not fall; you will not go into the realm of Death.

118. Om! The *pir* is [like] iron; the prayer is [like] copper.

Muhammad is [like] silver; God is [like] gold.

In between them, the world is sinking. Only we sit and watch, like this, without support.

This is the true saying of *bdbd* RatanhajT.

119. Talking is easy; doing is difficult.

Talking without doing is worthless.

A cat eats an educated parrot,

And in the pundit's hands [only] a book remains.

120. Talking is easy; doing is difficult.

Without eating, [you say]' Sugar is sweet'.

You eat *king* [asafoetida] but say it is camphor.

Gorakh says, all that is false.

121. O *avadhut,* do not sit in an assembly of fools;

Do not engage in discussions with pundits;

Do not provoke the king's anger in war;

Do not disclose the *nad* to a careless person!

122. Know the quality of the heart by [the work of] the hands.

This is the evil *kali* age.

Gorakh says, listen o *avadhut,*

What is in the pot *[karva* goes out through the spout.

123. Through the control of waters, the sky becomes immobile;

Through the control of grains, the light becomes brilliant;

Through the control of breath, closure begins;

Through the control of the *bindu,* the *skandhas* become stable.

124. Catch the *sabad,* o *avadhut,* catch the *sctbadl*

Status and reputation are all [based on] duality.

In the midst of the *atma* see the *paramatma,*

Like the Moon in water.

125. The posture *[asan]* should be firm;

The food should be solid and the sleep as well.

Gorakh says, Listen O son!

[This way] you will not die nor grow old.

126. Some blame [us], some pray [to us],

Some have faith in us.

Gorakh says, Listen O *avadhutl*

This path is truly without attachments.

127. [There are] one hundred thousand bowstrings and nine hundred thousand arrows.

[They have] pierced the fish that dwells in the sky.

The fish is pierced together with the sky.

It is true, it is true, says Sri Gorakhnath.

128. When concentration is broken, how can nectar flow?

[When the mind is] Fixed in the *unmani,* the stability [of the flow] remains.

Fixed in the *unmani,* there is bliss.

If concentration is broken, the *skandhas* are destroyed.

129. Catch the *sabad,* o *avadhut,* catch the *sabad).*

The *sabad* makes the body perfect.

Ninety-nine *crores* of kings have shaved their heads [for this]

And their countless subjects [have done the same].

130. The subtle wind remains continuous.

Inside the body, the *maharas* is perfected.

Gorakh says, I have caught the unstable.

Joining Siva and Sakti, I have remained within my own house.

131. The fire [greed] of the stomach is to be rejected, (greedy fire)

And the fire of the eyes eaten.

Then the chariot of the *guru* is in front of you.

But [only] a rare *avadhut has* achieved this.

132. The inaccessible and the unseen remain without passion.

[But] there is no rest in a cave with a bee.

[They] are awake at night yet don't know the method.

No one holds the mind in control.

133. [There are] nine *nadis* and seventy-two rooms.

All *astcmga* is a lie.

Use the *susumnd* as the key *[ida[* and the lock *[pihgala].*

[Then] reverse the tongue and touch the palate.

134. 0 pundit, why do you die struggling for knowledge?

Know the highest place in some other way!

You are practising *asan* and *prdnayam.*

Day and night, you start and you finish tired.

135. The *unman* yogi is in the tenth opening.

Joining the *nadmd* the *bindu,* [he hears] the sound.

In the tenth opening, the door is closed,

[But] Gorakh has investigated [it] by other means.

136. The first yogi is so called when he is balanced.

But the unstable yogi always thinks of the body.

The moving *bindu* should be fixed in one place.

Then you will know what it means to be the first yogi.

137. Remaining within the body, the mind never goes far.

The yogi drinks wine like a hero, day and night.

[If] you discard tasty and tasteless through the [control of] breath and [the passage of] time

Then you will know the quality of the yogi's body.

138. The experienced yogi plays in the *unman.*

Day and night, he meets the gods according to his will.

The unstable yogi has many forms.

[If you know this, then] you should know the form of the experienced yogi.

139. How to recognize a perfected yogi?

He is like an iron, [perfected] in fire and water.

He looks upon the king and his subjects as equal.

Thus you will know the form of the perfected *yogi.*

140. O *avadhut,* salty [food] causes loss of weight,

And acidic [food] causes the waterfall [i.e. loss of semen; a code word].

Sweets produce diseases. Gorakh says, Listen o *avadhut*

Yoga consists in grains and water.

141. The mendicant performs *amari;*

And protecting the *amari,* he does the *prdndyama* [lit. wind].

Those who, in making love, preserve the *bindu,*

They are Gorakh's brothers.

142. *Bindu* in the mouth *ofyoni* becomes mercury in the mouth of fire.

Whosoever preserves it, he is my *guru.* [N.B. This is a saying, not *sabadi.}*

143. Those who seek the essence of pleasure in the body

Disrespect the *guru's* words.

Without fire [i.e. meditation] there is no union [i.e. yoga],

And the uncooked *ras* spills out.

144. 0 *avadhut,* the Lord should be called my disciple

And Matsyendra the grand disciple.

But that the Earth should not be destroyed for the lack of guru,

I have reversed my rank.

145. Eating till full, there is spilling [of the semen].

This is not yoga, my son, but a great misfortune.

During the *samyam,* gather the breath!

In this way, the Eternal Person should be grasped.

146. Eating you die; not eating you die.

Gorakh says, O son, by *samyam* you can cross over.

Remain always in the middle.

When the mind is fixed, the breath becomes stable.

147. Breath is verily yoga, breath is verily pleasure.

Breath verily takes away the thirty-six diseases.

Few know the mystery of the breath.

In so doing, you are the creator, you are God.

148. *Bindu* is verily yoga, *bindu* is verily pleasure.

Bindu verily takes away the thirty-six diseases.

Few know the mystery of this *bindu.*

In so doing, you are the creator, you are God.

149. The true *sabad* is like a line of gold. Those without guru are false.

To those who have a guru it [=*sabad]* is an instruction.

Guru's disciples remain good.

Those without guru stray and turn wicked.

150. O *avadhut,* understand and don't forget that.

[Those] without understanding are lost on the road.

They roam in the desolate jungle

Where they will be killed by the thieves.

151. An egotist minds only himself;

He does not search for the guru's word.

Those who search for a guru are living,

While the egotist's body perishes.

152. [They have] unrestrained senses and an obscene tongue:

Gorakh says, They are low persons.

Whoever controls the sex and has a mouth that speaks truth -

Such a true man I call the highest.

153. O *avadhut,* if the heart is pure, even [water] in a wooden pot is the Ganges .

If all ties are severed, the whole world is [your] disciple.

Gorakh explains the form of truth [=God].

Consider the essence: it has neither representation nor form.

154.1 learned the *sakhis* and sold all evil things.

I found the lost treasure in a dream.

I kept inquiring and gathering [the treasure].

The *nith* says: 0 son, it is beyond false and pure.

155. O Goddess, come and take a seat!

Enter [the space] of the 12 fingers length [above the head].

When you enter there, there will be happiness.

Then the sorrow of birth and death will go away.

156. O *svami,* the breath is uncooked, life-energy is uncooked,

Uncooked is body, the *bindu* is uncooked.

How to cook it? How to perfect it?

If the fire is insufficient, water will not boil.

157. 0 *devv.* If the breath is cooked and life-energy is cooked,

If body is cooked and the *bindu* is cooked,

Then the fire of *brahman* burns continuously.

If the fire is sufficient, water will boil.

158. Sleeping slanted, standing erect,

Neither the *bindu* nor the breath is on fire.

When *asan,* breath and meditation are fixed,

The fire *of bindu* will not be extinguished.

159. The rising Sun; the full orb.

The sting of death is far away.

The *nattts* storage is completely full.

Every day's necessities are always present.

160. [Real] rank and position is the wisdom of a guru.
Reaching the understanding, travel with the *siddhas.*
An intelligent child does not wander and stray away.
The mercy of the lord is complete.

161. He who has the superior essence should be called guru,
And he who has less of the essence should be called disciple.
If you like it, travel in company;
Otherwise, wander alone.

162. Travelling on the path, one's robe is torn apart,
Dust rises, body perishes,
Concentration breaks.
The love of God [lies ahead].

163. Travelling on the path, the breath is disturbed
As well as the *nid, bindu* and wind.
Inside the body are the 68 *tirthas:*
Hey brother, where are you travelling to?

164. If someone, having become a yogi,
Scorns other people and consumes wine, meat and *bhang,*
He causes 71.000 of his ancestors to go to Hell.
It is true, it is true, says A&vGorakh-rai".

165. O *avadhüt,* eating meat violates the law of compassion;

Drinking wine, life is hopeless;

Eating *bhang* destroys wisdom and meditation:

People who do so weep in the court of Yam.

166. You should travel on the road or stitch the robe.

You should maintain meditation or speak wisdom.

You may be either alone or amongst others.

Gorakh says, O son, this way the mind will not be disturbed.

167. O scholar, study and consider the wisdom *oí brahman.*

[You think that] upon death one is released in the heaven of Visnu?

[No:] he goes to 84 burning pits.

It is true, it is true, says Gorakh-rai.

168. Know Sadá-Siva in the *ikas-tattva.*

Inside it is the *nirván-pad.*

Whoever becomes intimate with the body through initiation,

For him there is no more coming and going [= life and death].

169. The light of fire is strong.

The influence of the Sun cannot be hidden.

The rays are touching the golden lotus.

They absorb all the bad smells of dirty water.

170. By listening to everyone no wisdom will come.

The sandal tree does not grow in every forest.

Who will get wealth and power?

Only a few understand the essence of this.

171. Having drunk the downward flowing nectar of immortality

I have pierced the six petals.

There I, Sri Gorakh-rai,

Have seen the Moon without moonlight.

172. Either the mind continues to hope,

Or it dwells in ultimate detachment.

Either the mind dwells in the shelter of a guru,

Or it lingers around a naked woman.

173. Do not force control, do not leave it slack.

You should know the mystery of fire.

Even the old one [= the first woman = *mdyd]* will become the speech [or: wife] of the guru [= truth].

It is true, it is true, says Sri Gorakh-dev.

174. It is neither outside nor inside. It is neither near nor far.

Both Brahma and the Sun searched for it.

The white crystal is pierced by the diamond jewel.

This highest truth was reached by Sri Gorakh.

175. That which, having come, gives allure to the five elements,

And which, having gone, provokes lust,

Where does this sleep come from?

Gorakh asks his father Machindra.

176. In the circle of the sky is an empty hole.

There lightning flashes in terrible darkness.

From there sleep comes and goes.

It is contained within the five elements.

177. [Whether] standing, sitting or sleeping, you should attain it [= the *nad*\.

Never break your concentration.

The unstruck word thunders in the sky.

If your body falls, you will dishonour the true *guru.*

178. [If] alone, you are a hero.

[If there is] another, you are patient.

[If there is] a third, there will be animosity. [If there is] a forth, a trouble.

[If there are] five to ten [people], there must be a quarrel.

179. Who is alone, his name is *siddha.*

The two together are *sadhus.*

Four and five, their name is family.

Ten to twenty, they are an army.

180. O you, who turn toward the heart, take initiation from the guru.

Give up flesh and blood into the mouth of fire.

Cast off the elements [= the blood and semen] of mother and father.

He who is like this is able to summon God.

181. Everybody says *'nad, nad',*

But few remain immersed in the *nad.*

The *nad* and the *bindu* are [as pure] as a crystal.

Those who have acquired them have achieved success.

182. A *dervish* is the one who knows the way in.

He revolves the five breaths.

He is mindful day and night.

Such a dervish is of Allah's caste.

183. The adept is sitting and the hero is roaming

To maintain the body, unchanging.

But Gorakh-raya is to be seen unchanging on the inside,

Even while he is wandering.

184. You should perfect both *nad* and *bindu,*

And then play the unstruck sound.

Search for a solitary place, o Bharathari!

Thus says Gorakh, Machindra's devotee.

185. The Moon is within the Sun, the Sun within the Moon.

When the three triangles are contracted, the horn blows.

Gorakhnath speaks one full ***pad.***

The simpleton avoids it, while the hero masters it.

186. The protected breath remains continuous.

An old body wastes away.

Take hold of your own mind and unstable breath,

Says the ***nath*** that lives eternally.

187. [When] the first and the second are joined with the third,

Check the breath at the western gate.

The oil is not spent, the flame is not extinguished,

Says the ***nath*** who has become immortal.

188. For as long as the snake ***[kundalini]*** comes and goes,

And as long as Garur does not dwell in the house of Visnu,

For so long it is hard to achieve success in yoga

Without water and food, illness spreads.

189. There is no guru such as wisdom,

No disciple as the heart;

There is no friend such as the mind:

For that reason, Gorakh roams alone.

190. [Additional ***sabad.]***

Disguise is complete, knowledge incomplete.

The belly is empty - the hero is arrogant.

Gorakh says: He could not master yoga.

Being a hypocrite, he pleases others.

191. Fire is verily yoga, fire is verily pleasure.

Fire takes away the 64 diseases.

If someone knows the mystery of this fire,

Then he is creator, he is God.

192. The living yogi drinks day and night

The continually flowing nectar of immortality.

In the midst of the visible consider the invisible,

As well as the inaccessible and the infinite.

193. Life should be laid down [as a bed]; death should be spread over [as a blanket].

Then, there will be no illness.

Within a year, the body should be transformed.

Only a rare yogi is [able to do] this.

194. The Sun should be food; the Moon should be sleep.

Neither of them [should?] drink water.

Death should be the bedrock of life.

This is a saying uttered by Gorakh.

195. Wherever is Gorakh, there is wisdom and humility,

And there is no duality or arguments.

Whosoever is beyond desires and plays without tricks -

Call him a Gorakh.

196. In the circle of the sky a cow gave birth,

Yoghurt has fermented into a book.

The pundits have drunk the rejected churned milk,

The ***siddhas*** have eaten the butter.

197. The yogi's garb has come from the beginning of time [lit. *4yugas].*

It was spread thanks to the ***siddhas*** and the female ascetics.

The garb is a dwelling for an ascetic.

Thus says Gorakh, Machindra's devotee.

198. Only few can conquer the evil lust.

It has overpowered gods and men, Bali and his brother SugrTv.

Lust has entered the God Brahma,

And Indra has got a thousand vaginas.

199. Lust has entered 88.000 great sages.

Visnu's ***maya*** cannot be overcome.

This God of lust has danced upon Siva,

The great God who originated dance.

200. Vi§nu descended into the ten ***avatars,***

But they were overcome by lust.

The invincible lust was conquered by the ascetic Gorakh.

He preserved the downward flowing ***[bindu].***

201. There are six ***astika*** pundits and no ***nastikas.***

They had fearless faith in themselves.

Searching for knowledge, they found the science [of nectar].

It is true, it is true, says the ***siddha,*** the true king of the ***naths.***

202. Our mind should be called mother,

And ***niranjan*** our father.

Call our ***guru*** the sage

Who has saved us from the body.

203. The ego should be cast off, the true ***guru*** should be searched for,

The path of the yogis should not be avoided.

[Then] there will be no more human births.

One should join the company of the ***siddhas.***

204. The sky is held up without pillars,

And the lamp burns without oil.

[If] the words of guru Gorakh are trusted,

There will be neither day nor night.

205. The learned pundit speaks arrogantly

And destroys the words of truth.

He speaks arrogantly of the sacrifice of the body.

He does not penetrate to the inner essence.

206. Whosoever possesses greatness but does not show off his greatness

And who, considering the ***sabad*** true, and who, being modest,

Finds a true guru -

The burden from his head/ shoulders will be lifted.

207. If, having a ***kimadhenu*** in the house,

It is tied, due to the *siddhi,* at the summit of the sky,

The ***jiva*** will be controlled,

And the achievement will be approved by ***niranjan.***

208. How could one who consumes opium and eats *bhang*

Achieve wisdom?

The bile increases, the breath gets shorter:

For these reasons, Gorakh does not eat *bhang.*

209. One who leaves his house and builds hermitage

Abandons illusion and collects alms.

He leaves his wife and employs an ugly female servant.

For that reason, Gorakh roams alone.

210. There is no peace with a woman; there is no illness with a doctor.

The alchemist [first] examines and then eats.

The yogi is never old; the hero does not have wounds on his back -

So says Sri Gorakh-ray.

211. In my opinion,

The whole world depends on the food of the whore.

Very few are saved.

Thus says Ratan-nath.

212. [Additional *sabad.]*

In sleeping and dreaming, the *bindu* is lost.

Travelling on the road, the soul is distressed.

Sitting, there is a quarrel; standing, there is trouble.

Gorakh says: O son, [remain in] *sahaj-**samadhi.***

213. Dry throat [from thirst], suffering from hunger;

One's body neglected, overcome by sleep;

Speech without wisdom, restlessness -

For these reasons, Gorakh does not eat *bhang.*

214. The angry and the quarrelsome; the one who suffers from a bloated stomach

The foolish glutton, the one who craves pleasure -

Gorakh, the complete yogi, says:

The real yogi does not exert himself.

215. [Additional ***sabad]***

O ***avadhut,*** food should be reduced,

The breath should be reversed,

And then there will be no illness.

From time to time the body should be transformed.

216. The path is for a brave one; after laughter comes the rest.

O you who are mindful, consider this:

The unexamined body is a useless pit.

In the end, it will be a burden.

217. The reversed ***sakti*** rises to ***brahmana)***

The breath plays throughout the body, from the toes to the topknot.

The reversed Moon eclipses Rahu.

This is a sign of success, says Gorakh the sage.

218. Considering the lower and the upper:

Here indeed is the refuge.

When the lower and the upper are known,

There will be no more duality.

219. The tongue and the penis are one channel;

The one who keeps it closed is saved from death.

O learned scholars don't be arrogant!

The one who has conquered the tongue has conquered everything.

220. Gorakh says, Ours is a difficult path.

Keep the tongue and the penis under control!

People who spend time in the practice of yoga

Are not eaten by Time [Death].

221. O pundit, watch for one year!

You will understand the one truth.

When *surati* has entered the *sabad,*

Gorakhnath says, 0 brother, don't be lost in doubt!

222. 0 pundit, understand the incomprehensible

And tell the story that can't be told!

Having met the true guru, bow your head.

Stay awake at night until sunrise.

223. The learned speak after study,

The ignorant speak out of ignorance.

They do not understand the higher truth.

Gorakh says, they are great sinners.

224. Marching constantly on the road,

The breath is lost,

The body wastes away,

And the essence is gone.

225. O *kazi,* do not say: 'Muhammad, Muhammad'.
Muhammad's thought is deep.
There are 80.000 perfect prophets
With Muhammad.

226. [Missing.]

227. Life soul [Jiva] dwells with Siva.
[Therefore], one should not eat the blood and meat of animals.
You should not kill the life of your kinsmen.
Gorakh says, Consider our children.

228. Why do you kill life, O you who [also] possess the body?
You kill the deer of the five elements,
Grazing in the desert on the grass of intelligence.
The root of yoga is compassion and generosity.
Gorakh says, Those who strive for liberation
Should kill this rebellious mind
That has no body, colour, flesh or blood.

229. He whose mind has devoured
Both Gods and demons
Should [also] kill the mind
By taking hold of the arrow of guru's wisdom.

230. A yogi is the one who upholds yoga.

He is not seeking pleasure through the tongue and penis [other senses].

Leaving illusion [form] and staying within reality [formlessness],

This is the one whom Gorakh calls a yogi.

231. Emptiness is mother, emptiness is father,

Emptiness is ***niranjan,*** your own self.

Having known the emptiness remain still.

The established yogi is profoundly deep.

232. Leave the bad woman, give up ***bhang;***

Perform the bodily ***bandhas*** day and night.

In this way, all success in yoga comes to you

And the ***guru*** will establish you in ***nirvan samadhi.***

233. Having gathered the distracted [seeds?] the flower blossoms.

The smoke of the burning ***siddhis*** is rising up.

Gorakhnath says, the smoke is the ***pran.***

Thus, to know the body is to know the ***pran.***

234. 0 ***avadhut,*** your mind is wandering.

You should experience everything through it.

The mind should move back,

Just like a spider up its thread.

235. Where there is hope, there is disappointment;

And where there is doubt, there is sorrow.

These cannot be avoided without initiation.

Both are great ills.

236. Enter deep into the body.

Do some meditation in the brain.

There are five evils inside.

Crush them immediately.

237. Everybody says *'bindu, bindu.'*

But only few acquire the *mahabindu.*

Have confidence in the *bindu*

And then the *skandhas* will be stable.

238. The upside-down root has no branches.

[Semen] flows out through a torn undergarment.

It is not damaged; it does not dissolve.

The *bindu* does not fall into the mouth of the vagina.

239. The light is shining without fire.

I saw it through the guru's grace.

God's white stone is not salt [despite its appearance].

Who recognizes it [as such] has [truly] seen it.

240. The bright fish always lives in water

And the boar is always dirty.

Without the wisdom of ***atman*** and mercy

What is the use of this thin body?

241. Do not drink datura, o ***avadhut,***

Do not eat ***bhang,*** o brother!

Gorakh says, Listen o ***avadhut,***

Or your body will not be yours.

242. Master, female friend, son, husband:

All were born through one gate.

They enter it as men and exit like sons.

For that reason, Gorakh is an ***avadhut.***

243. One who keeps it remains; if it is lost, you are gone.

It is true, it is true, says Sri Gorakh-ray:

If one declares and other accepts -

Gorakh says, he has great wisdom.

244. Thinking arises from the unthinkable [= God];

Thinking troubles the whole world.

A yogi forgets about the thinking [worry],

And immerses himself into the unthinkable [= God].

245. Wisdom to the householder, meditation to the drunkard,
Ears to the deaf, honour to the prostitute,
Pleasures of the world to the renouncer -
They are all one company [= useless].

246. A householder who talks about wisdom,
A drunkard who tries to meditate,
A renouncer who maintains desire -
The nath says, They are all in a nice trap.

247. The one who becomes ascetic after his wife has died,
The one who runs after food,
And the one who becomes renouncer after losing his wealth -
The nath says, All three are wretched.

248. Reading, reading, reading - so many have thus died;
Speaking, speaking, speaking - what has been achieved in such a way?
Going on and on and on - so many bodies have gone
Without realizing *parabrahman.*

249. It is true, it is true, says Gorakh-rana:
Avoid the company of these three:
The noiseless, the earless,
And the one-eyed.

250. The company of woman is not proper to the saints.

When you touch the charcoaled pot

It will leave a stain

On the hand.

251. It is improper to sit in the company of woman

Even if she wears a saintly robe.

Gorakh says, So what if she is a laywoman?

So what if she is an initiate?

252. Mature yogi lives from aeon to aeon.

The one [whose *bindu]* leaks is constantly dying.

[The one who] investigates the body and finds the indestructible [God]

Attains the unreachable immortal rank.

253. Self-control is the essence of the *yogi* who does ***japa*** and ***tapas.***

Sex is a wound [even if] burnt to ashes. [?]

Such a yogi is to be seen in the world.

Everyone else is just filling the belly.

254. This is the test of ***yogesvar.***

To use *sabad* after proper consideration.

The pot should be filled

In accordance with its capacity.

255. Press and overfill it - the pot breaks.

Leave it outside - it gets damaged.

Indeed, the pot is too small and there is too much filling -

Say, O guru, what shall you do?

256. O ***avadhut,*** freely take, freely give,

Freely love and be devoted.

Freely, freely go ahead, O ***avadhut,***

And then the pot will accept plenty.

257. In the gourd are thrown together

The three worlds, the three rivers, the Sun and the Moon.

Be aware, O you knowers *of brahman,*

The unstruck sound is unbreakable!

258. Truth and virtuous conduct are the [first] two baths,

The third is [listening to] the guru's speech.

The fourth bath is [instructing] the disciples. The fifth bath is compassion.

The child Gorakh performs these five pure baths every day.

259-60. The people who love women are gone;

The people who divide community are gone;

The treacherous people are gone;

People who eat dirty food are gone;

People without *sabad* are gone;

People who preserve *bindu* are gone;
People who enjoy others' wives are gone.
It is true, it is true, says the child Gorakh.
Renouncing these, remain beyond them!

261. A scholar that is not serious; a sweeper;
A scattered company; a woman without character;
An illiterate *brahmin;* a householder yogi.-
The *nath* says, O son, avoid their company!

262. The night is passing; the half night is gone.
One child is crying:
Is there a hero in the city
Who can end the sorrow of the child?

263. Wherever the gaze falls, everything is precious.
Precious is the spoken word.
The ***nath*** is saying imperceptible utterances
That are without limits.

264. My *sobad* is a sharp sword
And my life is true.
I read that letter which is not written
Either on a document or on a decorated paper.

265.1 will tie the mind with the breath and I will tie the breath with the mind.

Then I will speak powerfully.

I will make the mind into my disciple; I will push out the breath.

There, where the mind and the breath cannot go, I will remain absorbed.

266. From which country are you coming, yogi,

And where are you heading?

Who is your sister and sister's daughter?

Where will you rest your feet?

267.1, yogi, come from the western country,

I am heading north.

Earth is my sister and my sister's sister.

My feet are upon the head of a sinner.

268. The power *[sakti]* is hunting,

Attacking with fame and fortune.

Gorakh says, I will conquer power,

And then I will take a guru.

269. The *nith* says, Both of my paths are pure.

Without restraint, the hero is not true.

My way of life is to practice restraint and to be true.

And yours is the sacrifice of goats, O Devi!

270. The one who tells stories should be called disciple,

And the one who reads the Vedas the grandson.

Who lives a pure life, he is my guru,

And I am a follower of the pure life.

271. The pure life should be called my guru.

I am a disciple of the pure life.

If it is acceptable, travel in company;

Otherwise, travel alone!

272. ***Darsan*** is the mother, ***darsan*** is the father;

Darsan lies naturally within the soul.

If somebody knows the mystery of this ***darsan*** -

He is creator, he is God.

273. The one who knows and has a real experience -

Hold fast onto him!

Gorakh says, O brother:

What my ears have heard my eyes have seen.

[Additional *sabads:]*

274. When sitting, the twelve; when moving, the eighteen;

When sleeping, the thirty is broken.

When speaking, the sixty-four is broken.

Why should I sing praises to God?

274. [Alternative translation:]

In the sitting, the twelve are moving; when moving, the eighteen are sitting;

When sleeping, the thirty threads are broken;

When speaking, the sixty-four are broken

Why should I sing praises to God?

275. Above the nose, in between the eyebrows,

I remain fixed day and night.

I will not return to birth in mother's womb,

I will not suck on milk again!

Pads

(Rag Ramgr!)

1.

Clinging to sleep the whole night,

Life is squandered in worldly affairs.

With raised hands, Gorakhnath is calling out:

My brother, don't destroy the root! (Refrain)

1. On *amavas* and *parivd,* the mind and body should be empty

And they are to be empty on [all] auspicious days.

While the devoted and virtuous *brahmin* is considering the *Vedas,*

On the tenth day *[dasamf]* the afflictions should be destroyed.

2. On the first day of the Moon there is bliss;

On the second, the Moon should be grasped by the five [senses] and protected.

On the eighth, fourteenth and eleventh, the vow should be taken:

'I will not touch the body of a woman.'

3. On the outside, sleep at night but inside remain awake.

The watch should be kept during the three twilights.

After three periods [=18 hrs] and two hours

There comes the watch of Death [4 a.m.].

4. Sleeping next to the woman's body you will suffer death;

In [her] company don't even drink the water

In this way, Machindar became immortal.

This saying was spoken by Gorakh.

2.

O dear, cut off and give up, cut off and give up,

Give up greed, attachments and false reality!

Having known *atman,* O *gurudev,*

Protect the beautiful body! (Refrain)

1. In Vidyanagar I met the guru Kanhi-pa.

From him I received your message.

2. Therefore I say, O guru,

Everything happened because of your naivety.

You lose all the juice *[ras],* 0 guru,

In the snare of the tigress.

3. Gorakhnath is dancing,

Playing tricks with the ankle-bells.

You have lost all learning, O guru,

Falling in love with the tigress.

4. All the juice *[ras]* is gone,

Only refuse has remained.

O dear devotee Machindranath,

Yoga is [thus] not possible!

5. All the juice has gone,

   But the essence is protected.

   Gorakhnath says, O guru,

   Yoga is limitless.

6. Adinath is grandson,

   Machindranath is son.

   Gorakh ***avadhuta***

   Speaks this ***satpadi*** [= poem in six stanzas].

3.

Listen Machindra, Gorakh is speaking.

He speaks of reaching the unreachable.

You have not performed *nirati* nor listened well

[Although] you are *satguru* and I am *celd* [disciple]. (Refrain)

1. Straying down among women,

   There is no yoga.

   How many have entered

   The mouth of vagina!

   From whence they took their birth,

They have entered there again.

This is a magic jewel

To remind you [of that]!

2. Leaving the twelve [= Sun], you are running after the sixteen [= Moon].

But there is neither ***jiv*** nor Siva there.

Fourteen [regions] of the universe and nine [planets, *grahas]* are one life *[dam]*

But it is still hopeless.

3. Using the water of time, you are washing the [timeless] sky.

You have come breathing in and out.

Gorakhnath says, It has always been like this:

The banyan tree is contained in its seed.

4.

Looking at the house [= world], Gorakh said:

Only the few understand these truths, my dear! (Refrain)

1. Whatever you searched for anywhere, what you searched for in the jungle,

You should leave it aside!

Whoever brings his position and senses under control,

He always gets everything.

2. Through his mind, he saved the body.

Through faith in mind, he found [God].

The pot of nectar is filled within mind.

By this mind the unseen *[alakh]* is seen, my dear!

3. Thus, who arranges the sitting of *purus,*

He gets to know *purus.*

Finding *purus,* he protected the nectar of *purus.*

Purus was made visible by *purus,* my dear!

4. In the house without Sun or Moon,

In this house there is a light.

Whosoever completes the *isan,*

His pot *ofsahqj* is filled, my dear!

5. The jewel is pierced in the mind. That was accomplished by the searcher.

This is the food, this is the drink.

The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the kindness of Machindra:

The pure nectar is found through searching and searching, my dear!

5.

Yogi Gorakh, measuring the right measure & coming close

Has collected the precious jewel. [Refrain]

1. If the *bindu* is well,

The body will not perish.

One wasted ***bindu*** is worth

One hundred thousand measures.

2. What arises in the mind

Is performed in action.

Who embraces lust, anger and greed

Dies in *sarpsdr* and emptiness.

3. At the summit of the sky,

There is a fine celestial water.

Stupid people are dying

Not knowing the essence.

4. The full Moon is like

A company of women in a castle.

It will rob the gem

Of knowledge and life.

5. Adinath is the grandson,

Machindra is the son.

Gorakh ***avadhut*** has preserved the ***bindu***

So that the scales are in balance!

[Or: Gorakh ***avadhut has*** preserved

And measured the ***bindu.]***

6,

Take the gold, take the golden nectar,

My profession is a goldsmith!

When the bellows are blown

And the golden nectar has become solid gold

Then the great nectar

Is found in the sky. [Refrain]

1. The self is the gold, the self is the goldsmith.

   The root ***cakra [muJ cakra]*** is the furnace.

   On the anvil of ***nad*** I hammered the ***bindu***

   And the sky sat inside [my] body.

2. When the endless forest of sex is turned into charcoal

   Then blow upon the two tubes with *scthqj.*

   When the Moon and the Sun are balanced and preserved

   You have met your own Self.

3. The work of ***rati*** is stolen by ***masa,***

   Masa is stolen by ***rati.***

   What is stolen from ***masa*** remains in the ***masa.***

   In this way, the bonds are connected. [N.B. ***rati*** and ***masa*** are measuring devices.]

4. Gold is below, gold is above.

   In the middle of gold is gold.

Whosoever knows the living way of the three voids,

In his body there is neither sin nor virtue.

5. *Unmani* is the prop and *man* the scales.

The air measured six ***missis.***

Gorakh himself sat for weighing

And then the gold turned into *sahaj.*

7.

Wise astrologer, take a look and think:

Whether the man was first or the woman? [Refrain]

1. There was no wind there and no cloud.

The grandfather [=Brahma] made a temple without pillars.

There she [=Maya] emerged

By herself.

2. There, the father was not sitting.

The mother was a young unmarried girl.

The husband was put to sleep in the cradle.

Even there, she is rocking the cradle.

3. I gave birth to Brahma, Vi§nu and Adi Mahesvara

And I am [also] their housewife.

My power of illusion

Is [thus] twofold [i.e. both as a mother and a wife].

4. Ganga and Yamuna are my bed,

The circling of breath [hams] is my blanket.

The earth, the stones and the water are my followers

But I am not limited by them.

5. My whole life passed in the crusher

But I could not clear the rice from the paddy grain.

The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:

See these truths and think about them!

8.

Let us go, five brothers,

Let us go into the forest

Where 'sorrow' and 'pleasure' and 'fame'

Are not known! [Refrain]

1. If I work in the field, it dries without rain.

If I engage in trade, the capital is lost.

2. If I take wife, then the house breaks apart.

If I have a friend, he turns into a snake.

3. If I gamble, I suffer the loss.

If I steal, it burdens my body.

4. I f l go to the forest, the trees bear no fruit.

If I go to the city, I get no alms.

5. Thus spoke Gorakhnáth, Machindra's son.

Give up ***maya,*** brother ***avadhütl***

9.

Gurudev Sambhu is the God within the body.

Átman is the highest God.

I do not know how to worship Him.

Doing constant ***pujas*** to other Gods

We die in vain. [Refrain]

1. At the nine gates there are nine Náths.

Jagannáth is at the confluence of the three rivers ***[triveni]***

And Kedarnáth is at the tenth gate.

2. When the essence is joined through yoga,

Then one is saved

From the worldly [sea],

Says Gorakhnáth

After due thinking.

10.

O my mind, close your business.
The man of breath has been born.
The awakened yogi is set towards ***atman***
And I have realized the city of the body. [Refrain]

1. The man of breath repeats the string of ***jap***
   21,600 times.
   Prana flows through ***ida, pingla*** and ***susumna***
   Day and night.

2. In the six- and sixteen-petalled lotus
   The ***brahmacari*** lives.
   The ***hams*** breath has entered the flower.

3. O ***avadhut,*** I did the trade with watermelon
   Again and again at the bank of Ganga.
   It goes down but brings the fruit up
   And makes the Moon and Sun join.

4. When both the Moon and the Sun disappear in the sky
   A frightening darkness appears.
   When the five watchmen have fallen asleep
   The gate of the city wall comes into view.

5. The body is a robe and the mind is the yogi -

The true guru revealed this to me.

Gorakhnath says, protect this [knowledge] well -

The city thief is at large.

Hi

A vadhut spoke, thinking about truth:

There is too much vain talk on earth.

I swam over eight mountains without water:

And that is a great wonder. [Refrain]

1. The mind and the breath [reach] the unreachable light.

   The Sun and Moon and stars are gone.

   The three kingdoms are not of the three families.

   The breath of the *siddhi* is from the *four yugas.*

2. The five [=senses] have entered into six.

   There are seven ***dvipas*** and eight women.

   The nine parts of earth have [merged] within twenty-one

   And the eleventh has [merged] into one ***tari*** [= the highest point].

3. In the twelfth, ***ida*** and ***pingla*** are in the ***trikuff.***

   In the fourteenth, the mind has been met [as in sexual union].

In sixteen lotuses with sixteen petals there are 32 things

And the fear of old age and death has disappeared.

4. In the tenth gate dwells ***niranjan,*** beyond mind ***[unman]***

And there the ***sabad*** is met through [the practice of] reversal ***[ulapi].***

Thus spoke Gorakhnath, Machindra's son.

I remained unmoved and firm.

12.

Om Namo Sivai, ***baba,*** Om Namo Sivai!

How to use this ***mantra*** day and night?

The one who can explain the separate letters [A.U.M.] to me,

He is my teacher and I his disciple, 0 dear! [Refrain]

1. ***Omkar*** is a flowing root ***mantra.***

Omkar pervades the whole world.

Omkar [is] at the navel and in the heart.

It is both God and guru.

Without mastering the ***omkar*** there is no *siddhi.*

2. Brahma is immersed in the ***nad,***

Nara[singh] Hari [= Visnu] is immersed in the ***nad.***

&iva is immersed in the ***nad.***

Take up yoga and be resolute.

Nad is indeed the treasure-house of everything.

The supreme ***nirvan*** is found

Through the ***nad,***

O ***babu !***

3. The breath resounds, the breath thunders,

The breath echoes. The breath pierces the six *cobras*

And roams up and down

And in the middle.

Breath is flowing through the body

In the form *of'soharri* and *'ha/**psa'*** *mantras.*

Through the grace of breath,

The ***bindu*** remains in the mouth of the ***guru.***

4. The mind kills and the mind dies.

The mind saves and the mind gets saved.

If the mind is not fixed,

It fills the three worlds.

The mind is the beginning,

The mind is the end,

And the mind is the essence.

In the mind, O ***babu,*** lust ceases.

5. Sakti is [manifest] in the form of blood,

Siva is [manifest] in the form of semen ***[bindu].***

The Sun has twelve digits ***[kaJas],***

And the Moon has sixteen digits.

If the Sun of four digits

Comes into the house of Moon

Then Siva and Sakti become coequal

And nobody knows their limit.

6. The king Ram dwells in all limbs.

These five elements naturally emanate light.

In these five elements,

0 ***babu,***

Samadhi is contained.

Gorakhnath says,

1 realized God

In this way.

13.

O ***avadhut,*** chant the ***jap*** and obtain the rosary.

Chanting the ***jap*** leads to success.

Gorakh chants the unfathomable ***jap ,***

Which only few know. [Refrain]

1. Make the lotus-body into a body of gold.

O you, carrying your rosary, wake up!

The sins of many births are thus destroyed,

Chants Gorakh the cobbler.

2. I chant the ***jap*** of one syllable - one Om.

   Empty and gross are two words.

   The body and the universe are of equal weight.

   I received initiation with one syllable.

3. [With the ***jap*** of] two syllables I distinguish two opposites.

   I chant the ***jap*** of the formless one.

   The chant that gave rise to all of creation

   Is the chant that Sri Gorakh has uttered.

4. I chant the three-syllable ***jap*** in the ***trikupl***

   And thus I live in the ***brahmakund.***

   Gorakh chants the ***ajop-jop***

   Which is the unparalleled and highest wisdom.

5. With the four syllables I have established the four ***Vedas,***

   The four forms, the four names.

   The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the grace of Machindra:

   I chant the ***ajap-jap*** and remain firm.

14.

Play polo with a happy wanderer [=yogi]!

Why are you lost in pride?

There is no gap between earth and sky,

Only the liberation field of the supreme. [Refrain]

1. Within the one there is the infinite, and within the infinite there is the one.

   By the one the infinite is produced.

   When the one is experienced within,

   The infinite is contained within the one.

2. The ***nad*** is the anvil, the ***bindu*** is the hammer.

   The Sun and the Moon are the bellows [blowing pipes] of the breath.

   [When you] press the root ***[cakra],*** seated firmly in the ***asan,***

   Then birth and death disappear.

3. Make ***sahqj*** the saddle and breath the horse.

   Take the reins and whip the mind!

   The rider is consciousness; make knowledge the ***guru***

   And get rid of all deviations.

4. Three worlds are found within the sesame seed.

   The Lord has made this possible.

   Therefore the one you were searching for

   Was within you.

5. If I say that [He] exists, nobody will believe.

   But if [He] is not, how can this [= yoga] be proved.

Gorakh says, Listen Machindra:

The diamond is pierced by a diamond.

15.

Trade with the truth, trade with the truth,

So that my mind can rely on that! [Refrain]

1. Gorakhnath does trade with the ***sahqj.***

   There are five bullocks and nine cows.

   I arranged the place,

   And my mind soars upwards.

2. I am doing commerce on the steep ***ghat.***

   I have spread out the emptiness.

   I am unaware of taking and unaware of giving:

   This is how I trade.

3. Says Gorakhnath, Machindra's son:

   There is no profit from such a trade!

   I got across to the other side by my own deeds,

   Taking the ***guru***'s words as my companions.

16.

My yogi the 'renouncer' enjoys pleasures day and night

And does not leave the company of the yoginT.

[His] mind comes swinging to Manasarovar lake
And builds a monastery in the circle of the sky. [Refrain]

1. Where are your father-in-law and mother-in-law?
Where do you dwell?
Where have you met the yogini?
Where have you found your home?

2. My father-in-law and mother-in-law reside in the navel.
I dwell at the place of ***brahman.***
I have met the ***yogini*** where ***ida*** and ***pingla*** [meet].
I have found my home in the ***susumna.***

3. By burning desire and anger, I have made lime,
And by burning sex I have made camphor.
The mind and the breath are ***kattha*** and betel-nut.
The ***unmani*** is vermilion ***tilak.***

4. Wisdom and the ***guru*** are my water-gourd
And my will is the handle of consciousness.
The ***unmani,*** like a string, begins to play,
And my greed is extinguished.

5. In this way, the true guru has married me,
A delicate young maiden.

Sri Gorakh spoke through Machindra's grace:

The fear of máyá's name is gone.

Take hold of that vine, o ***avadhüt,*** take hold of that vine,

Gorakhnáth knows [how].

It has no leaves or root, no flower and no shadow,

And it grows without water. [Refrain]

1. The grove of the body is your garden, o ***avadhüt,***

   [Where] the true guru planted a creeper.

   A man waters it often,

   And a nice vine flourished up to the house.

3. Its root is the Moon, o ***avadhüt,***

   And the leaves are the Sun.

   The fruit is the full Moon.

   Understand that [its]yTv is the knowledge of the guru.

4. The vine is on fire, o ***avadhüt,***

   The fire reaches the sky.

   As soon as the creeper starts burning,

   New shoots emerge.

5. From the cut vine new shoots spring up;

   If watered, it dries up.

Ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:

It always remains new.

18.

O pundit, understand the wisdom of ***brahman,***

Says learned and wise Gorakh. [Refrain]

1. [It is] a plant without seed, a tree without root;

   [Even] without leaves and flowers it gives fruit.

   [It is] a barren woman's child,

   The legless and armless riding [the branch] on a tree.

2. [It is] the Moon without sky, the Sun without universe,

   The battlefield without war.

   The man who knows this highest truth -

   In his heart is the highest wisdom.

3. [It is] neither formless nor with form, it has no symbol nor [method of] worship.

   The unstruck sound resounds without a sound.

   [It is] a flower without garden, a fragrance without flower,

   A bee charmed without [scent in] the air.

4. It is [like the Moon] swallowed without Rahu; it burns without fire.

   It is a pond filled without water.

Explain this highest truth, O pundit,

[Who] read ***$g, Yajur, Sama*** and ***Atharva Veda.***

5. Self-knowledge is the light [of the ***mantra]'soham'*** [T am He'].

[It belongs to] neither earth nor sky nor sea.

Gorakh plays between Ganga and Yamuna

By the grace of the guru Machindra.

12i

Gorakhnáth says, through the tenth door

I reached heaven and Kedar [= Siva].

From the summit of twenty-one worlds

I proclaimed self-knowledge. [Refrain]

1. Šakti is inside the twelve petals of the Sun,

And **Siva**'s place is inside the sixteen [petals] of the Moon.

Mula[dhar] and Sahasrár are the house of ***j'fva*** and Siva.

Unmani lies [in] steady meditation.

2. The unstruck sound plays music,

The Sun has risen in the West.

The southern Goddess dances in the North,

Hell is in the East.

3. I performed the ***mudrd*** of the Sun and Moon.

The ash of the earth was mixed with water.

Nadi, Bindi, Simgi and Akasi ***[Yogis]***

Are the disciples of the formless ***[alakh] guru.***

4. The ***[yogi's]*** garb is made of 360 patches

And of 21.600 strings;

[It has] 72 ***nadis.***

It was sewn by 52 ***birs*** [using] 89 needles.

5. I searched in ***Ida,*** I filled the ***pingala,***

And through ***susumna*** I reached the sky.

Ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra

About the location of the ***niranjan siddhi.***

20.

A little mango flowered on the ground.

Up the seed of the ***mm*** tree gave fruit.

This fruit tastes sweet when eaten.

Those to whom their ***guru*** gave insight know this. [Refrain]

1. A hawk caught a camel

And sat on a little branch.

A barren woman gave birth to a child,

Though she never laid eyes on a man.

2. The wood sinks, the stone floats.
The world is passing [away] while watching.
A camel floated on a rivulet
And the rabbit could not go through a hole.

3. A fish climbed to a mountain. The rabbit is in the water.
Fire burns in the water.
A water wheel overflows next to a thirsty [man].
A thorn is taken out by a spike.

4. [There is] one cow, nine calves,
And five milkmen.
One flower, sixteen buckets.
The gardener's wife is overjoyed.

5. An outcast without hands and legs performed a robbery
And by thieving returned a cow.
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:
She could not give birth a second time.

Gorakh is a cowherd.
He drinks the milk of the cow in the sky.
Churning the curd, he drinks the juice of immortality
And lives without fear. [Refrain]

1. Without love, the mother died.

Without father, the child died.

Lai Gwalior [Kr?na], without family,

Takes the cow to pasture, day and night.

2. He sounded the unstruck sound on his conch

And crushed the great army of Death.

Inside the body, within the circle of the sky,

The master is found through *sahaj.*

3. This ***gayatri***cow, which I brought from the circle of the sky,

Is at the door of my house.

My family is attached to it

And I have tethered it permanently.

4. This cow is without ears, tail and horns

And without colour.

The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:

There I remain absorbed [in meditation].

22.

O ***avadhut,*** think of such a wisdom

In which a brilliant light shines. [Refrain]

1. Where there is yoga, there is no illness,
Through such a test the guru should be accepted.
If there is no intimate knowledge of the mind and the body,
Why are you working so hard uselessly?

2. Without conquering death, without abandoning the snares of the world,
Even by practising *tapas* one does not become a sage.
Let no one destroys his family
If he has not met the perfected guru.

3. The body is a cage made of seven elements
Where the parrot is caged without ties.
Salvation comes [only] after meeting the *sadguru,*
Otherwise there comes destruction.

4. Your body is an ornament as beautiful as the God of Love:
Why are you coating glaze powder on it uselessly?
Gorakh says, Listen O fool:
Why do you water a castor-oil plant with nectar?

23.

Niranjan nath is proclaiming:
"My comings and goings are over!
"Searching the body and the universe,
I've got all the *siddhis."*

1. In the fortress of the body

There are 900,000 canals.

At the tenth door

The *a vadhut has* undone the lock.

2. In the fortress of the body

Are the gods, the temples, and Benares.

There I have naturally met

The Indestructible.

3. Says Gorakhnath,

Listen O people:

Only a few can conquer

The fortress of the body.

24.

O air, which way will you go?

The yogi is chanting *qjap-mantra*

At the *triveni*

On the *ghaf.*

1. The Moon made embroidery and *tilak,*

And the Sun cleared the path.

Muni Raja washes clothes

At the *ghaf of* Ganga and Yamuna.

Brush [the sari] on both sides [to avoid wrinkles]

Then, your mind will be at rest

And the air will be still [so that it does not disturb the sari while drying].

Recognize the tenth door, so that your comings and goings will cease.

Says Gorakhnath, Machindar's son:

My profession is the oil-crusher.

I press out the oil from the ball

And throw out the dry remains.

25.

0 *avadhut,* the earthen pot is on the shoulder of the water-bearer,

And the *gauri* on the shoulder of Siva.

The master of the house wants to see the show,

Why don't you bring it closer?

Salt says, I am not salty.

Ghee says, I am dry.

Air says, I am dying from thirst.

Food says, I am hungry.

Fire says, I am dying from cold.

Cloth says, I am naked.

The unstruck drum is playing,

And the lame have started to dance.

3. Adinath is the *baul bdbd,* Machindar is the son.

The yogi has penetrated

The impenetrable mystery,

Says Gorakh avadhuta.

26.

O ***avadhut,***

In the middle of the mountain, three and half hands tall,

A fine vine is spreading.

[The vine is spread three and a half times within the mountain.]

The vine is the flower,

The vine is the fruit,

The vine is the fruit of salvation. [Refrain]

1. This vine shines since the beginning of creation.

It had no root, but it reached the sky.

It spread its legs upwards.

The astrologer does not understand, but [only] guesses.

2. Such a *Bhil* hunter is without hands.

He has crippled legs and there are no teeth anywhere in his mouth.

There is shouting "Ho, ho" but has no bow;
The sound of his bell is without voice.

This ***Bhil*** aimed the arrow
And pierced the deer in the heart.
"Ho, ho!" the deer was pierced by the arrow,
But there was no bow, nor arrow, nor aiming.

Bhilri Matangi Rani brought the deer home
The deer was without legs.
Its head, horns and mouth
Could not be perceived.

Says Gorakhnath, Machindar's son:
He who killed the deer, he is an ***avadhut.***
If someone understands this riddle,
He is a yogi who can understand the three worlds.

27.

0 ***avadhut,*** my city is like this,
Look at its ablution gate.
The lower and upper sides of the market are decorated,
Says the wise Gorakh.

1. The master the vital air is the ***badsdh*** there,

The thinking is the ***kdzi,*** the five elements are the ***vazirs*** [petitioners],

The mind and the breath are the elephant and the horse,

Wisdom is the permanent treasure. [Or: the treasure is beyond counting.]

2. Our body should be called a city,

The mind should be called magistrate.

Intelligence should be called chief policeman,

So that the thief cannot peep through the door.

3. The fortress is built

From three hundred and sixty walls,

Sixteen canals are dug.

Nine gates are visible, the tenth cannot be seen.

4. Collecting all types of wood for the castle,

Seventy two rooms were built.

Upon nine chains the locks are attached,

So that the fortress of the body cannot be taken over.

5. The unstruck bell resounds the time;

Two lights are the supreme illumination.

The heads of lust and anger are cut off.

In this way father Adam enacts the justice [runs the kingdom] of the ***badsdh.***

6. There, the Truth is the wife, Contentment is the prince.

Forgiving and Devotion are the two nurses.

Adinath's grandson, Machindarnath's son,

Gorakhnath is the founder of the city of the body.

28.

In twenty one universes

The furnaces are dripping [with brew].

Whosoever drinks from them is always intoxicated.

The will, ***kalvdr*** [innkeeper], is offering full cups of excellent wine. [Refrain]

1. Grapes of nectar have filled the furnace,

   In their midst some sugar was thrown.

   The mind is ***mahua,*** the body is yeast,

   And eighteen kinds of plants were mixed.

2. In the cave of bees, the mind is fixed in meditation

   After the *dsan* was taken.

   The consciousness of the yogi is completely drunk,

   And remains from age to age concentrated at the ***trikupisangam.***

3. The small pot at the ***trikufisangam*** got filled;

   A sumptuous drink is prepared.

   Whatever was not wine was discarded,

   What remained was the pure essence.

4. Such a wine Sri Gorakh made,

Says the son of Machindar.

The one who made it and drank it fully

Became an immortal ***avadhut.***

29,

It is true, it is true, says Sri Gorakh Yogi.

I will remain devoted.

I must remain in the company of the one

Who has met the Invisible Person in the guru's mouth. [Refrain]

1. In the middle of *satya yug,* the first *yug* was created.

One snake fell down.

Devoid of wisdom, O ***avadhut,***

Many ***gandharvs*** were bitten.

2. In the middle of the *tret yug,* the second *yug* was created.

Ram did *Rdmayan.*

The men and monkeys all died fighting,

They did not attain wisdom.

3. In the middle of *dvdparyug,* the third *yug* was created.

There was much hypocrisy, much pressure.

Kauravs and Pandavs died fighting,

Narad caused the destruction [of the world].

4. In the middle of ***kali yug*** the fourth ***yug*** was created.

   Proper conduct came to an end.

   In every house was a quarrel, in every house was arguing,

   Every house was destroyed by talking.

5. In the middle of ***four yugs,*** the fourywg.s were established.

   Wisdom was destitute.

   The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the grace of Machindar:

   Only a few managed to get across.

30.

Chant this chant, having fixed your mind.

"So 'ham, So 'ham" is the ***ajap-chant*** to be sung. [Refrain]

1. Assume a steady posture and maintain meditation.

   Remember the wisdom of ***brahman*** day and night.

   Be lucid when sleeping, eat moderately,

   Get rid of lust, anger and ego.

2. The breath in front of the nose,

   Ida and ***pingala*** should be harmonized.

   After 600,000 chants

   The ***andhad*** will arise effortlessly.

3. In the curved vein the Sun will rise,

And from every pore

The sound of the trumpet

Will be heard.

4. [There is] the place of the reversed lotus with a thousand petals.

In the cave of bees is a brilliant light.

In the sweet emptiness Siva Gorakh says:

The *sadhus* attain the supreme truth.

31.

Yogi Kanak Raval woke up

Immersed in *gurudev's* rain.

After searching and searching I have found the true guru

And naturally become satisfied. [Refrain]

1. In the North country a cloud thundered,

In the South is the shade.

In the East country rain is released,

In the West, it reached the fields.

2. Yoke the horse of mind and breath,

And use the True Name as reins.

Grow the seed of the ***dharma*** of compassion,

And reap the supreme harvest.

3. It does not get depleted by eating, it does not diminish by giving,

   It does not go to the gate of death.

   The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindar:

   It always remains fresh.

31

Life ***[fiv]*** and God [Siva] live together.

Blood and meat of killed [creatures] should not be eaten. [Refrain]

1. Do not deal the mortal blow,

   0 you who belong to the family ***of haws***

   Thus says Gorakhnath

   Who does not eat young animals.

2. O man, you should kill the mind, the enemy,

   Which does not have

   A father [body] nor colour,

   Neither flesh nor blood.

3. It has devoured the whole world,

   The gods and the demons.

This mind should be killed

By seizing the arrow of the guru's wisdom.

4. O you who kill the animals that possess the body,

   You should kill the deer of the five elements that grazes in the garden of wisdom.

   The root of yoga is compassion and giving.

   Gorakhnath says, This is the wisdom of *brahman.*

[RAG ASAVRI]

33.

This is the initiation sermon given by Sri Gorakh Raya

Who has reformed the four worldly classes. [Refrain]

1. Study yourself!

   Distinguish between proper and improper law!

   Know the mystery of mysteries!

   Fulfil hopes and expectations!

2. In the middle of a difficult juncture

   Perform five *sandhya* prayers at the proper times.

   You should remain at the tenth door

   And serve the feet of the Formless One.

3. Chant the *ajap* chant,

   Consider your own self.

Let go of all crutches;

There is neither virtue nor sin there.

4. Fix yourself in meditation day and night.

   You should rejoice in the eternal Ram.

   Gorakhnath speaks this wisdom:

   I have found the supreme treasure.

34.

Find the profound guru!

Don't remain without a guru.

Without a guru wisdom can not be found,

O brother! [Refrain]

1. Even washed in milk coal does not become white.

   A crow does not become a swan

   Even [by wearing] a flower garland

   Around its neck.

2. The crow flies off with a loaf of bread.

   My guru asks, where does it sit and eat?

3. It comes from the northern region.

   It is going to the western region;

Then my guru asks,

There it sits and eats?

4. The elephant is contained

In the eye of an ant.

In the mouth of a cow

A tiger is born.

5. The barren woman is giving birth

For twelve years;

She has broken her hands and legs.

Thus speaks Gorakhnath, Machindar's son.

35.

O Raja ***avadhut,*** guess what this is?

Neither the sky nor the earth,

Neither the moon nor the sun,

Neither day nor night? [Refrain]

1. It is ***orpkdr, nirdkdr*** [formless].

It is neither subtle nor gross.

It is neither tree nor leaf,

It does not flower, nor does it give fruit.

2. It is neither branches nor root,

It is neither tree nor creeper,

It is neither ***sdkhi*** nor ***sabad,***

Neither guru nor disciple.

3. It is neither in wisdom nor in meditation,

It is neither in yoga nor in the yogi,

Neither in sin nor in virtue,

Neither in liberation nor in the liberated.

4. It is neither born nor destroyed,

It neither comes nor goes,

It does not get old or die,

It has neither father nor mother.

5. Says Gorakhnath,

Devotee of Machindar:

It is neither a state of devotion,

Nor is it ensnared in hope.

36i

Come on Mother, go to each house.

Child Gorakh, eat your food! [Refrain]

1. Semen is not spilling,

The ***nad is*** sounding,

There is neither Moon nor Sun,

Neither affirmation nor denial.

2. Through the miraculous pill of the breath

   Your dwelling is in the ***dkds.***

   Inside your self is the sky and Kailas.

   The ***dobi*** from the netherworld climbs up into emptiness,

   Says Gorakhnath, as Machindar told him.

37.

What would you say, 0 pundit,

Where does god live?

Take a look at the true reality:

There is neither " I " nor "you". [Refrain]

1. In the stone temple

   There is a god of stone.

   Worshipping the stone,

   How can love bloom?

2. You are destroying what is alive

   To worship what is dead.

   How will you get across that which is difficult to cross

   With a wicked deed?

3. You bathe

In ***firth*** after ***firth.***

Washing the outside,

How will you reach the inside?

4. Adinath's grandson,

Matsyendranath's son,

Gorakh ***avadhut***

Has seen the true reality.

38.

0 pundit, enough of learned discussions.

He who does not talk, he is the ***avadhut.*** [Refrain]

1. Brahma is in the leaf, Visnu in the bud,

And the god Rudra is in the fruit.

Having destroyed the three gods,

Whom do you serve?

2. The ***samnyasi*** has become

The ascetic with one, two and three staffs.

Not having found Vi§nu,

He died wandering at the ***tirthas.***

3. One *kaldmukhi* ascetic with matted hair
Performed the worship of the *lingam.*
Not having found Mahadev,
He died rubbing ashes [on his body].

4. The four great teachers and the twelve great disciples became united.
Could they overcome death?
Burning lights again and again
They all died.

5. On the nights of *caudas* and *purnimd*
A Jain fasted.
Having not become an *arahant,*
He died pulling out his hair.

6. There was one priest, two Korans, eleven prophets.
Not having found Allah,
They died
Performing call to prayer.

7. There were nine *natbs* and eighty four *siddhas*
Performing *dsans.*
Having not found yoga,
They died wandering in the jungle.

8. The body is woven from five elements,
No one was able to preserve it.
Death is destroyed when wisdom shines,
Thus says Gorakh.

39,

Gorakhnath says, The fortress of the body should be taken.

The fortress of the body should be taken
And life enjoyed
From aeon to aeon. [Refrain]

1. Inside the fortress of the body
There are 900,000 canals.
The moving *yantras*
Do not allow the fort to be taken.

2. Up and down there are mountains
And the dazzling canals.
Water from the reservoir
Fills the fortress.

3. There is no 'here'
And no 'there'
In the middle of *trikupi.*
I live naturally in the emptiness.

4. Adinath's grandson,

Machindar's son,

Gorakh ***avadhut***

Has won the fortress of the body.

40.

Says Gorakh RaT, reach the place of Kedar!

O Son, Drink the water, the essence of three worlds! [Refrain]

1. There are many high mountains and difficult ***ghdts.***

Gorakhnath has made them smooth.

7. The black Ganga and the white Ganga

Are seen sparkling.

The water collected in buckets

Again reaches the spring.

8. Yogesvar below,

Kedar above;

Foolish people do not know

The door to liberation.

9. Adinath's grandson,

Machindarnath's son,

Gorakh ***avadhuthas*** accomplished mastery

Over body and Kedar.

4 L

With whom do you fight, RaT ***avadhuV.***

No opponent is in sight.

The one you are fighting with

Is your own self, Ram. [Refrain]

1. Self is indeed the fish and the tortoise,

   And self is the net.

   Self is the fisherman,

   And self is death.

2. Self is indeed the lion and the tiger,

   And self is the cow.

   Self kills

   And self eats.

3. Self is the scaffolding,

   Self is the ladder [rung], self is the knot.

   Self is the corpse,

   Self is the shoulder [on which it is carried].

4. There is no other ***firth***

And no other god to worship.

Gorakhnath says,

It is invisible and undivided.

42.

My guru sings three songs.

I don't know

Where my guru went;

I cannot sleep now. [Refrain]

1. The pot is in the potter's house,

The cream is in the milkman's house.

The woman is in the *brahmin's* house.

Woman, cream, pot.

2. The spear is in the king's house,

The creeper is in the jungle.

The oil is in the oil maker's house.

Oil, creeper, spear.

3. The buffalo is in the herdsman's house,

The *lingam* is in the temple.

Asafoetida is on the market.

Asafoetida, *lingam,* buffalo.

4. From one thread

Many things that look different are made

Gorakh says, *maya* has two *gunas.*

Satguru is the one who explains it.

43.

O guru-jT, don't do such a thing.

Because of that, you are wasting the *maharas amfi.* [Refrain]

1. The tigress enchants the mind during the day, and at night sucks up Sarovar Lake.

   Although they know it, foolish people keep tigresses in the house.

   Just like a tree on the bank of a river, a man in company of a woman has little hope of surviving.

   What springs up from the mind falls down from the top of Meru and there is no hope for the body.

2. The legs become shaky, the stomach loose

   And the head [white] like a heron's wings

   And the eyes are rolling, unable to see

   When the tigress has sucked up *maharas amft.*

3. Curse the tigress, turn the tigress into a slave.

   The tigress is our body.

   The tigress swallowed prowling men and gods

   Said Gorakh-Raya.

44.

Pleasure seekers are asleep.

Even today they are not awake.

O misfortunate people,

It is a sickness. [Refrain]

1. The pleasure seeker says,

   My pleasure is good.

   Desiring women,

   He turned his body into ashes.

2. For one drop of semen

   Men and women exhaust themselves to death,

   But the yogi who controls it

   Thereby achieves success.

3. The true hedonist is the one

   Who keeps away from the vaginas.

   Rajas and ***tamas***

   Do not cross his door.

4. Gorakhnath says,

   Listen 0 men-folk!

There is no yoga

In telling stories.

45.

Kill, kill the serpent!

Enter the pure water!

Gorakhnath saw

The three worlds bitten [by the snake].

1. Kill the serpent,

   Wake up the bee;

   What can Death do

   To the one who has killed the snake?

2. The serpent says,

   I am a powerful woman,

   I have deluded Brahma,

   Visnu and Mahadev.

3. Intoxicated serpent

   Runs in ten directions,

   Gorakhnath rushes [after her]

   Like wind with ***agdriir*** [mantra against snakes].

4. Adinath's grandson,

   Machindar's son,

Gorakh avadhuta

Has killed the snake.

46.

0 pretty one, give the place for the child Gorakh.

Mother, I have drunk without the drink.

1 have arranged the palanquin of wisdom

On which the child Gorakh is sleeping. [Refrain]

1. The divine daughters of the world of gods,

   The women of the world of mortals,

   The snake daughters of the netherworld—

   The child Gorakh is burdened.

2. He has killed *maya,*

   Given up shelter, given up family and relations.

   Gorakh, the child, is in the thousand petaled lotus

   Where there is Mansarovar Lake.

3. He gave up hope, gave up desire,

   Gave up will, O Mother.

   Having wandered about the nine parts of Earth,

   Gorakh stays in the house of Machindar.

47.

Nath is saying immortal words:

The blanket will rain, water will get wet! [Refrain]

1. The calf is fixed [in the ground]
   And the stick is tied to it.
   The big drum walks,
   The camel sounds.

2. The Plpal tree sits
   On the branch of a crow,
   The cat runs away
   At the sound of a mouse.

3. The traveller is walking,
   The road is tired;
   The bed is sleeping
   On the woman.

4. The dog is hiding,
   The thief is barking.
   The cowherd is coming,
   The cattle is calling.

5. In the middle of the city
   Is a deserted village;

The pot is below,

The pot-carrier above.

6. The stove burns

   Inside the wood,

   The bread is

   Eating the baker.

7. An amorous woman burns,

   The furnace gets warm.

   In the middle of the fire

   The fire shivers [from cold].

8. One barren woman

   Was barren, but

   The daughter-in law gave birth to her

   Mother-in-law.

9. The water from the pot

   Goes to the well.

   Gorakh sings

   The upside-down song.

48.

The vagina is a vampire. The vagina is a vampire

Without teeth, she devoured the whole world.

The wise have saved their head with wisdom;

The people have forgotten their own selves. [Refrain]

1. During the day, the tigress sleeps,

   And at night she sucks from the body.

   [Man] does not understand the nature of sexual lust,

   So he keeps and nurtures the tigress in his own house.

2. Gorakhnath says,

   Joining two hands:

   It fights in front

   Without teeth [lit. with broken jaw].

3. People who rub skin against skin

   Waste the body day by day.

   They are not introduced to self-knowledge at the guru's mouth,

   So the tigress devours them.

4. The tigress gives birth, the tigress kills,

   The tigress rears the body.

   The tigress roars at the side of the king of death:

   Gorakh Raya has experienced this [seen her].

49.

O *gurudev,* the tigress lies in
The beautiful, in the ugly and in the innocent looking [woman].
Mother that showed you the world, you are
Sleeping in a dark and lonely place. [Refrain]

1. Look for the guru, *gurudev,*
   Look for the guru! Gorakh is saying so.
   Having achieved liberation you fell into the chains.
   How can that be liberation?

2. 0 *gurudev,* rubbing skin against skin day after day,
   The body wastes away.
   The lips, the throat and the palate went dry.
   The marrow of the bone sucked up and eaten.

3. The moth burns in the flame, *gurudev,*
   And such is the shelter of the vagina.
   You become old and then earned the kingdom.
   Give up lust and illusion.

4. Gorakhnath says,
   Listen O Machindar, you are the son of god.
   The man who keeps
   Semen from spilling, he is an ***avadhut.***

59.

It is heavier than anything

In the three worlds;

It is thinner than water,

Lighter than a flower. [Refrain]

1. The mind cannot be known from the outside nor through the body.

   Day and night, turn inward.

   The ***mudrd*** of the mind is without form.

   See the form of the world in the mind.

2. When the breath becomes reversed

   Then it will conquer the body.

   The captured crystal will turn into gold and remain such.

   This body is a house of truth.

   The transformed blood

   Turns into the juice of immortality.

3. The supreme person reaches the place of wisdom.

   Having become fixed he observes the body.

   He eats old age, death and time.

   The complete yogi is a real yogi.

O son, harmonize the Garur and the snake,

O son, rub the nectar at the door of god.

Rubbing and rubbing it will become soaked.

Gorakh has seen these things clearly.

51.

Tie, tie the calf;

Drink the milk.

In the *kaliyug,*

The body will become immortal. [Refrain]

The cow in the sky

Gave birth

To a calf.

This cow had no tail nor legs.

Twelve calves,

Sixteen cows.

The night has passed

In milking the cow.

The cow does not eat

Bad and rejected food

She runs to kill

The five cowherds.

4. The milk of this cow
Is sweet.
Gorakhnath is sitting in the sky
And drinking it.

52.

It comes in company,
It goes alone.
That is why Gorakh
Takes pleasure in Ram. [Refrain]

1. The swan came in union with the body,
But no yogi could catch it.

2. It lives in the world,
It dies on cremation;
But where did
The person of the breath go?

3. Birth, death, and separation again:
That is why Gorakh became a yogi.

53.

All the pupils have fallen asleep.
Nath satguru is awake.
Avadhutxs collecting alms of honey
At the tenth door. [Refrain]

The begging bowl is the *sahqj,*
The staff is the *susumna.*
Having met five companions
[The yogi] plays at nine places.

In the middle of Ganga and Yamuna
Light the fire at your seat.
Drive away the fear of death
By the *andhad* sound.

I take pleasure alone
At the circle of the sky.
I drink the juice of immortality
At the upper curved bank of the river.

Gorakhnath speaks
The instructions of a guru:
Having met the *sant* folk,
All worries are gone.

54.

O mind,

When diamond pierces diamond,

Then, where does

The body go?

At the summit of the sky,

The Moon will remain contained. [Refrain]

1. Use the seven, five, three and nine methods.

   Use opposite action *[ulpasadhana]*

   To make the breath steady.

   When the breath becomes steady,

   The ***maharas*** becomes ready.

   One among myriad, o *gurudev,* knows this.

2. [The ring] is tagged

   In a red thread in the ear,

   O *mir,* why do you forget [the way = why are you lost?]

   Yogi always remains practising

   At the bank of Ganga and Yamuna.

   Having entered Ganga and Yamuna take your bath.

   Pressing the root [= *mulddhar], 0 avadhut,*

   Keep the meditation.

3. Having fixed the staff of Meru,
Join Siva and Sakti.
Perform the worship of the guru
Who has untied the knot of Brahma.
When the knot of Brahma gets untied,
The staff of Meru grows big.
The five companions were crushed
And the Moon became full.

4. Make the Moon your support,
And make the Sun your mat.
Day and night wash clothes
At the ***ghat*** of ***triveni***

Below there is a piece of the Moon,
And a piece of the mat.
The ***siddha*** Gorakh says,

I have crossed over the river of the world [existence].

55.

O Yogi, wake up! Turn towards spirituality!
Do not lose the root of wakefulness, my brother!
Your master is sitting inside,
Watching and judging all your deeds. [Refrain]

1. Don't take a concubine, woman or wife.
Don't do the job of a prostitute.
If you keep company with widows
You will fall into hell—soul and body.

For one drop of selfish pleasure
You will get the same result
[As if you committed] infanticide.
Both men and women will fall into hell,
They will be thrown down and crushed.

Deceived by women, forgetting god,
Don't throw your harvest into a fire!
The ascetic Gorakh spoke
Through the mercy of Machindar:
Don't be defeated
In a winning game!

56.

O mango, let us go: the cuckoo is flowering.
The earth is turning upward to the heavens. [Refrain]

1. The poor cow has surrounded the lions.
The dead animal is skinning the ***sudra.***
Weapons get injured, the god is worshipping.

The king is serving the ploughmen.

The pot is below, the fire above.

If you do not waste the *mahdras,*

You will cheat time [death].

By burning the candle

And spreading the light:

At the head of Gorakh

There is a mountain [lit. given].

57.

A vadhut said to the king of Sammbhali,

Listen to the excellent speech!

Making love with a bad woman *[maya],*

You spend the night half-sleeping. [Refrain]

1. It has no branch or root, no leaves and no shadow.

   The lame is watering it without water.

   The drum without skin is sounding.

   Many people are enjoying it.

2. An ant is carrying the mountain, O *avadhutl*

   The cow tore the tiger.

   The rabbit is stopping the waves of the ocean.

   The deer killed the leopard.

3. Walking on the uneven path, O *avadhut,*

There is no light without a *guru.*

The winning Gorakh no longer loses,

Having understood the game.

58.

I am your devotee,

Oh unmade god!

Everybody [else] serves the made-up image:

They don't know your secret. [Refrain]

1. It is said, you are immortal and first.

I realized it.

The whole world is made by you;

You are not made by anyone.

2. The ten incarnations came and went,

But they are not Ram.

Even he got what he did [got the fruits of his deeds]:

The creator is some other one.

3. You are the complete *brahman*

And the only male person on the Earth.

You are both the form and the formless.

I never heard nor saw who is your creator.

4. You are you and became of yourself [created yourself]

And you saw the light.

Gorakh speaks the words of Guru:

You created all.

59.

[Rag RamgarT]

O mind, having become the king Ram,

Be without duality!

In the root lotus,

Prepare a place for the Sun and the Moon! [Refrain]

1. The ***anahad*** bee is roaming

At the ***trivenighdp.***

It is drinking the ***mahdras***

And opens the door.

2. Having made the Moon the prop

And the Sun the board,

The washerman is constantly

Washing clothes at the ***trivenighdp.***

3. Fill the narrow tube,

Fill the curved channel!

Gorakhnath says, O ***avadhut***

Thus you shall cross over!

60.

The child Gorakh is saying

The words of the true guru:

Jiva has married him

Who is neither fire nor water. [Refrain]

1. The milk is milking,

The buffalo is churning it.

The mother-in-law is rocked in the cradle,

The daughter-in-law is swinging it.

2. The cuckoo is flowering

The mango is spreading perfume.

The fish in the sky

Swallows the heron.

3. Farmer is cooked,

The caretaker is eating.

The grazing deer

Captured the hunter.

4. Yogi is made complete

With the ***singnad.***

Gorakhnath is married

Where there is no moon and no sun.

6L

[AratI]

I shall sing the ***drati*** of the ***nath niranjan,***

If my merciful guru permits. [Refrain]

1. Where the endless ***siddhas*** meet,

The ***aratl*** is sung;

There not even the word

Of Yam [death] comes near.

Where the lord Yogesvar meditates,

There the Moon and Sun bow their heads.

The ascetic Gorakh sings the ***aratl*** through the mercy of Machindar:

He has shown brilliant light where nothing else is present.

62.

The ***aratl*** for the ***nath niranjan*** is ready:

Cymbals are sounding the words of the guru. [Refrain]

The unstruck sound thunders in the sky.

There, there is the supreme light of the luminous self.

The light in the lamp is of unbroken light.

The supreme light is burning day and night.

The whole place became lit.

Niranjan is the god, and no other.

His age is limitless,

His end cannot be found.

There the conches, the drums, the flutes and tunes are playing.

I fill the jar with the raindrops of pearls.

I offer the flowers of form and formlessness.

The true reality is [his] name; [his] image is without image.

He is above all gods, his form is astonishing.

Adinath's grandson,

Machindar's son,

Gorakh *a vadhut* performs *draft.*